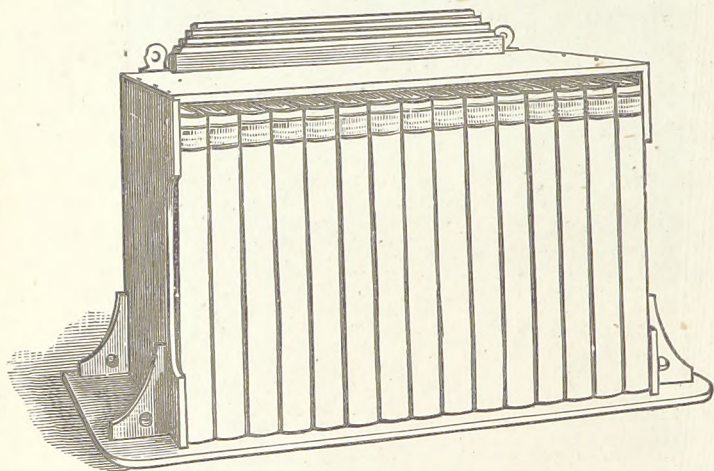


# DULCIE CARLYON

BY JAMES GRANT.



Fifteen Volumes in an Oak Bookcase.



Price One Guinea.

---

"Marvels of clear type and general neatness."—*Daily Telegraph*.

---

# MORLEY'S UNIVERSAL LIBRARY.

In Monthly Volumes, ONE SHILLING Each.

READY ON THE 25th OF EACH MONTH.



# MORLEY'S UNIVERSAL LIBRARY.

---

1. SHERIDAN'S PLAYS.
  2. PLAYS FROM MOLIERE. By English Dramatists.
  3. MARLOWE'S FAUSTUS AND GOETHE'S FAUST.
  4. CHRONICLE OF THE CID.
  5. RABELAIS' GARGANTUA, AND THE HEROIC DEEDS OF PANTAGRUEL.
  6. THE PRINCE. By Machiavelli.
  7. BACON'S ESSAYS.
  8. DE FOE'S JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR.
  9. LOCKE ON TOLERATION AND ON CIVIL GOVERNMENT; WITH SIR ROBERT FILMER'S PATRIARCHA.
  10. BUTLER'S ANALOGY OF RELIGION.
  11. DRYDEN'S VIRGIL.
  12. SIR WALTER SCOTT'S DEMONOLOGY AND WITCHCRAFT.
  13. HERRICK'S HESPERIDES.
  14. COLERIDGE'S TABLE TALK: WITH THE ANCIENT MARINER AND CHRISTABEL.
  15. BOCCACCIO'S DECAMERON.
  16. STERNE'S TRISTRAM SHANDY.
  17. HOMER'S ILIAD, Translated by George Chapman.
  18. MÆDIEVAL TALES.
  19. JOHNSON'S RASSELAS; AND VOLTAIRE'S CANDIDE.
  20. PLAYS AND POEMS BY BEN JONSON.
  21. HOBBS'S LEVIATHAN.
  22. BUTLER'S HUDIBRAS.
- 

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,  
LONDON AND NEW YORK.

# MORLEY'S UNIVERSAL LIBRARY.

---

23. IDEAL COMMONWEALTHS : MORE'S UTOPIA ;  
BACON'S NEW ATLANTIS ; AND CAMPANELLA'S  
CITY OF THE SUN.
24. CAVENDISH'S LIFE OF WOLSEY.
- 25 and 26. DON QUIXOTE (Two Volumes).
27. BURLESQUE PLAYS AND POEMS.
28. DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDY. Longfellow's Translation.
29. GOLDSMITH'S VICAR OF WAKEFIELD, PLAYS,  
AND POEMS.
30. FABLES AND PROVERBS FROM THE SANSKRIT.
31. CHARLES LAMB'S ESSAYS OF ELIA.
32. THE HISTORY OF THOMAS ELLWOOD, Written by  
Himself.
33. EMERSON'S ESSAYS, REPRESENTATIVE MEN, AND  
SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE.
34. SOUTHEY'S LIFE OF NELSON.
35. DE QUINCEY'S OPIUM EATER, SHAKSPEARE,  
GOETHE.
36. STORIES OF IRELAND. By Maria Edgeworth.
37. THE PLAYS OF ARISTOPHANES, Translated by Frere.
38. SPEECHES AND LETTERS. By Edmund Burke.
39. THOMAS À KEMPIS' IMITATION OF CHRIST.
40. POPULAR SONGS OF IRELAND, Collected by  
Thomas Crofton Croker.
41. THE PLAYS OF ÆSCHYLUS, Translated by R. Potter.

---

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,  
LONDON AND NEW YORK.



DULCIE CARLYON.





# DULCIE CARLYON

A *Nobel*

BY

JAMES GRANT *K*

AUTHOR OF 'THE ROMANCE OF WAR'

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL

NEW YORK: 9 LAFAYETTE PLACE

1886

# JAMES GRANT'S NOVELS.

## RECENT VOLUMES.

Price 2s. each, Fancy Boards.

*THE DUKE OF ALBANY'S HIGHLANDERS.*

*THE CAMERONIANS.*

*THE SCOTS BRIGADE.*

*VIOLET JERMYN.*

*THE DEAD TRYST.*

*COLVILLE OF THE GUARDS.*

*JACK CHALONER.*

*MISS CHEYNE OF ESSILMONT.*

*THE ROYAL HIGHLANDERS.*





# DULCIE CARLYON.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### IN THE HOWE OF THE MEARNs.

'THIS will end in a scene, Fettercairn, and you know how I hate scenes.'

'So do I, they are such deuced bad form.'

'I shall need all my self-possession to get over the *esclandre* this affair may cause,' exclaimed the lady, fanning herself violently.

'Well, life is made up of getting over things,' responded her husband.

'But not things so disgraceful as this, Fettercairn!'

'Is this son of yours in his senses?'

'Who *is* that loves? it has been asked,' said the culprit referred to.

'A marriage between you and a penniless girl in her rank of life is not to be thought of, Lennard.'

'Her rank of life, father?'

'Yes!'

'Her father's rank was superior to that of the first of our family, when life began with him.'

'What is that to you or to me now?'

'Much to me.'

'Too much, it would seem.'

The excited speakers were a Peer, Cosmo, Lord Fettercairn, his wife, the Lady thereof, and their youngest son, Lennard

Melfort, a captain of the line, home on leave from India, who had been somewhat timidly venturing to break—knowing the inordinate family vanity of his parents—we say to break the news of his love for a girl possessed of more beauty than this world's goods; and, in his excitement and indignation, his lordship's usual easy, indolent, and drawling way was forgotten now when addressing his son.

Cosmo, Lord Fettercairn of that Ilk (and Strathfinella in the Mearns), was by nature a proud, cold, selfish, and calculating man, whose chief passion in life was a combined spirit of enormous vanity and acquisitiveness, which he inherited from his predecessors, whom he resembled in political caution and selfishness, and also in personal appearance, to judge from the portraits of three generations, by Sir John de Medina, Aikman, and Raeburn, adorning the walls of the stately room in the house of Craigengowan, where this rather stormy interview took place.

Tall and thin in figure, with flat square shoulders and sandy-coloured hair, cold grey eyes, and irregular features, he was altogether a contrast to his son Lennard, who inherited his slightly aquiline nose and perfect face from his mother, but his firm dark eyes and rich brown hair from a previous generation; and these, together with an olive complexion, rendered more dusky by five years' exposure to an Indian sun, made his aspect a very striking one.

My Lady Fettercairn's birth and breeding were, as Sir Bernard Burke had recorded, irreproachable, and she certainly seemed a *grande dame* to the tips of her long slender fingers. She was about forty-five years of age, but looked ten younger. The upper part of her aristocratic face was strikingly handsome; but the lower, with its proud and firm lips, was less pleasant to look at. Her complexion was almost colourless, her hair of the lightest brown, like her eyebrows and lashes; while her eyes were clear and blue as an Alpine sky, and, as Lennard often thought with a sigh, they seemed quite as—cold.

Her manner was always calm, assured, and self-possessed,



She would smile, but that smile never degenerated into honest laughter, while her pale and impressive face was without a line—especially on her forehead—that seemed to indicate either thought or reflection, and certainly she had never known care or sorrow, or even annoyance, until now.

‘She is beautiful, mother,’ urged the young man, breaking an ominous silence, with reference to the object of his love.

‘Perhaps; but she is not one of *us*,’ exclaimed Lady Fettercairn, cresting up her handsome head haughtily, and a whole volume of intense pride and hauteur was centred in the last word she spoke.

‘Who is this Flora MacIan, as she calls herself?’ asked his father, in a similar tone; ‘but I need not ask. You have already told us she is the governess in a house you have been recently visiting—that of Lady Drumshoddy—a governess, with all her beauty, poor and obscure.’

‘Not so obscure,’ said Lennard, a wave of red passing under the tan of his olive cheek; ‘her father was a gallant old officer of the Ross-shire Buffs, who earned his V.C. at the battle of Khooshab, in Persia, and her only brother and support fell when leading on his Grenadiers at the storming of Lucknow. The old captain was, as his name imports, a cadet of the Macdonalds of Glencoe.’

‘With a pedigree of his family, no doubt, from the grounding of the Ark to the battle of Culloden,’ sneered his father.

‘Then his family would end soon after ours began,’ retorted the son, becoming greatly ruffled now. ‘You know, father, we can’t count much beyond three generations ourselves.’

Lord Fettercairn, wounded thus in his sorest point, grew white with anger.

‘We always suspected you of having some secret, Lennard,’ said his mother severely.

‘Ah, mother, unfortunately, as some one says, a secret is like a hole in your coat—the more you try to hide it, the more it is seen.’

‘An aphorism, and consequently vulgar; does *she* teach you

this style of thing?' asked the haughty lady, while Lennard reddened again with annoyance, and gave his dark moustache a vicious twist, but sighed and strove to keep his temper.

'I have found and felt it very bitter, father, to live under false colours,' said he gently and appealingly, 'and to keep that a secret from you both, which should be no secret at all.'

'We would rather not have heard this secret,' replied Lord Fettercairn sternly, while tugging at his sandy-coloured mutton-chop whiskers.

'Then would you have preferred that I should be deceitful to you, and false to the dear girl who loves and trusts me?'

'I do not choose to consider *her*,' was the cold reply.

'But I do, and must, now!'

'Why?'

'Because we are already married—she is my wife,' was the steady response.

'Married!' exclaimed his father and mother with one accord, as they started from their chairs together, and another ominous silence of a minute ensued.

'My poor, lost boy—the prey of an artful minx!' said Lady Fettercairn, looking as if she would like to weep; but tears were rather strangers to her cold blue eyes.

'Mother, dear mother, if you only knew her, you would not talk thus of Flora,' urged Lennard almost piteously. 'If we had it in our power to give love and to withhold it, easy indeed would our progress be through life.'

'Love—nonsense!'

'Save to the two most interested, who are judges of it,' said Lennard. 'Surely you loved my father, and he you.'

'Our case was very different,' replied Lady Fettercairn, in her anger actually forgetting herself so far as to bite feathers off her fan with her firm white teeth.

'How, mother dear?'

'In rank and wealth we were equal.'

Lennard sighed, and said:

'I little thought that you, who loved me so, would prove all but one of the mothers of Society.'

‘What do you mean, sir?’ demanded his father.

‘What a writer says.’

‘And what the devil does he say?’

‘That “love seems such a poor and contemptible thing in their eyes in comparison with settlements. Perhaps they forget their own youth; one does, they say, when he outlives romance. And I suppose bread and butter is better than poetry any day.”’

‘I should think so.’

‘We had other and brilliant views for you,’ said his mother, in a tone of intense mortification, ‘but now—’

‘Leave us and begone, and let us look upon your face no more,’ interrupted his father in a voice of indescribable sternness, almost hoarse with passion, as he pointed to the door.

‘Mother!’ said Lennard appealingly, ‘oh, mother!’ But she averted her face, cold as a woman of ice, and said, ‘Go!’

‘So be it,’ replied Lennard, gravely and sadly, as he drew himself up to the full height of his five feet ten inches, and a handsome and comely fellow he looked as he turned away and left the room.

‘Thank God, his elder brother, Cosmo, is yet left to us!’ exclaimed Lady Fettercairn earnestly.

It was the last time in this life he ever heard his mother’s voice, and he quitted the house. On the terrace without, carefully he knocked the ashes out of his cherished briar-root, put it with equal care into its velvet-lined case, put the case into his pocket, and walked slowly off with a grim and resolute expression in his fine young face, upon which from that day forth his father and mother never looked again.

Then he was thinking chiefly of the sweet face of the young girl who had united her fortunes with his, and who was anxiously awaiting the result of the interview we have described.

Sorrow, mortification, and no small indignation were in the heart of Lennard Melfort at the result of the late interview.

‘I have been rash,’ he thought, ‘in marrying poor Flora



without their permission, but that they would never have accorded, even had they seen her; and none fairer or more beautiful ever came as a bride to Craigengowan.'

Pausing, he gave a long and farewell look at the house so named—the home of his boyhood.

It stands at some distance from the valley of the Dee (which forms the natural communication between the central Highlands and the fertile Lowlands), in the Hollow or Howe of the Mearns. Situated amid luxuriant woods, glimpses of Craigengowan obtained from the highway only excite curiosity without gratifying it, but a nearer approach reveals its picturesque architectural features.

These are the elements common to most northern mansions that are built in the old Scottish style—a multitude of conical turrets, steep crowstepped gables and dormer gablets, encrusted with the monograms and armorial bearings of the race who were its lords when the family of Fettercairn were hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The turrets rise into kindred forms in the towers and gables, and are the gradual accumulation of additions made at various times on the original old square tower, rather than a part of the original design, but the effect of the whole is extremely rich and picturesque.

In the old Scottish garden was an ancient sun and moon dial, mossy and grey, by which many a lover had reckoned the time in the days of other years.

Of old, Craigengowan belonged to an exiled and attainted Jacobite family, from whom it passed readily enough into the hands of the second Lord Fettercairn, a greedy and unscrupulous Commissioner on the forfeited estates of the unfortunate loyalists. It had now many modern comforts and appliances; the entrance-hall was a marble-paved apartment, off which the principal sitting-rooms opened, and now a handsome staircase led to the upper chambers, whilom the abode of barons who ate the beef and mutton their neighbours fed in the valley of the Dee.

The grounds were extensive and beautiful, and Lord

Fettercairn's flower gardens and conservatories were renowned throughout Angus and the Mearns.

To the bitter storm that existed in his own breast, and that which he had left in those of his parents, how peaceful by contrast looked the old house and the summer scenery to Lennard—the place on which he probably would never gaze again.

There was a breeze that rustled the green leaves in the thickets, but no wind. Beautiful and soft white clouds floated lazily in the deep blue sky, and a recent shower had freshened up every tree, meadow, and hedge-row. The full-eared wheat grew red or golden by the banks of the Bervie, and the voice of the cushat dove came from the autumn woods from time to time as with a sigh Lennard Melfort turned his back on Craigengowan for ever, cursing, as he went, the pride of his family, for, though not an old one, by title or territory, they were as proud as they were unscrupulous in politics.

The first prominent member of the family, Lennard Melfort, had been a Commissioner for the Mearns in the Scottish Parliament, and for political services had been raised to the peerage by Queen Anne as Lord Fettercairn and Strathfinella, and was famous for nothing but selling his Union vote for the same sum as my Lord Abercairn, £500, and for having afterwards 'a rug at the compensation,' as the English equivalent money was called. After the battle of Sheriffmuir saw half the old peerages of Scotland attainted, he obtained Craigengowan, and was one 'who,' as the minister of Inverbervie said, 'wad sell his soul to the deil for a crackit saxpence.'

With the ex-Commissioner the talent—such as it was—of the race ended, and for three generations the Lords of Fettercairn had been neither better nor worse than peers of Scotland generally; that is, they were totally oblivious of the political interests of that country, and of everything but their own self-aggrandisement by marriage or otherwise.

Lennard Melfort seemed to be the first of the family that proved untrue to its old instincts.

'And I had made up my mind that he should marry Lady

Drumshoddy's daughter—she has a splendid fortune!' wailed Lady Fettercairn.

'Married my governess—that girl MacIan!' snorted Lady Drumshoddy when she heard of the dreadful *mésalliance*. 'Why marry the creature? He might love her, of course—all men are alike weak—but to marry her—oh, no!'

And my Lady Drumshoddy was a very moral woman according to her standard, and carried her head very high.

When tidings were bruited abroad of what happened, and the split in the family circle at Craigengowan, there were equal sorrow and indignation expressed in the servants' hall, the gamekeepers' lodges, and the home farm, for joyous and boyish Captain Melfort was a favourite with all on the Fettercairn estates; and Mrs. Prim, his mother's maid, actually shed many tears over the untoward fate he had brought upon himself.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### WEDDED.

AND you will love me still, Flora, in spite of this bitter affront to which you are subjected for my sake?' said Lennard.

'Yes,' said the girl passionately, 'I love you, Lennard—love you so much,' she added, while her soft voice broke and her blossom-like lips quivered, 'that were I to lose you I would die!'

'My darling, you cannot lose me now,' he responded, while tenderly caressing her.

'Are we foolish to talk in this fashion, Lennard?'

'Foolish?'

'Yes—or rash. I have heard that it is not lucky for people to love each other so much as we do.'

'Could we love each other less?'

'I don't think so,' said she, simply and sweetly, as he laid her cheek on his breast with her upturned eyes gazing into his.



The girl was slight and slender, yet perfect was every curve of her shapely figure, which was destitute of any straight line ; even her nose was, in the slightest degree, aquiline. Her beautifully arched mouth, the scarlet line of her upper lip, and the full round of the nether one were parted in a tender smile, just enough to show her teeth, defied all criticism ; her complexion was pure and soft, and her eyes were of the most liquid hazel, with almost black lashes. Her hair was of the same tint, and Flora seemed a lady to perfection, especially by the whiteness and delicacy of her beautifully shaped little hands.

When she walked she did so gracefully, as all Highland women do, and like them held her head poised on her slender neck so airily and prettily that her nurse, Madelon, called her 'the swan.'

'How I trembled, Lennard,' said she, after a pause, 'as I thought of the *mauvais quart d'heure* you were undergoing at Craigengowan !'

'It was a *mauvais* hour and more, darling.'

'And ever and anon I felt that strange chill, or shudder, which Nurse Madelon says people feel when some one crosses the place where their grave is to be. How can your parents be so cruel to you ?'

'And to you, Flora !'

'Ah, that is different,' she replied, with her eyes full of unshed tears, and in a pained voice. 'Doubtless they consider me a very designing girl ; but in spite of that, you will always care for me as much as you do now ?'

'Why such fears ? Ever and always—ever and always, my darling,' said Lennard Melfort, stopping her questioning lips most effectually for a time.

'Oh, if you should ever come to regret, to love me less !' said she, in a low voice, with her eyes for a moment fixed on vacancy.

'Why that boding thought, Flora ?'

'Because, surely, such great love never lasts.'

He kissed her again as the readiest response.

But the sequel proved that his great love outlasted her own life, poor girl !

Then they sat long silent, hand locked in hand, while the gloaming deepened round them, for words seem poor and feeble when the heart is very full.

‘How long will they continue to despise me?’ said Flora suddenly, while across her soft cheeks there rushed the hot blood of a long and gallant line of Celtic ancestors.

An exclamation of bitterness—almost impatience, escaped Lennard.

‘Let us forget them—father, mother, all!’ said he.

The girl looked passionately into the face of her lover-husband, the husband of a month; and never did her bright hazel eyes seem more tender and soft than now, with all the fire of love and pride sparkling in their depths, for her Highland spirit and nature revolted at the affront to which she was subjected.

The bearing of Lennard Melfort and the poise of his close-shorn head told that he was a soldier, and a well-drilled one; and the style of his light grey suit showed how thoroughly he was a gentleman; and to Flora’s loving and partial eye he was every way a model man.

They had been married just a month, we have said, a month that very day, and Lennard had brought his bride to the little burgh town, within a short distance of Craigengowan, and left her in their apartments while he sought with his father and mother the bootless interview just narrated.

For three days before he had the courage to bring it about, they had spent the time together, full of hopeful thoughts, strolling along the banks of the pretty Bervie, from the blue current of which ever and anon the bull-trout and the salmon rise to the flies; or in the deep and leafy recesses of the adjacent woods, and climbing the rugged coast, against which the waves of the German Sea were rolling in golden foam; or ascending Craig David, so called from David II of Scotland—a landmark from the sea for fifteen leagues—for both had a true and warm appreciation and artistic love of Nature in all her moods and aspects.

The sounds of autumn were about them now; the hum of insects and the song of the few birds that yet sang; the fragrance

of the golden broom and the sweetbriar, with a score of other sweet and indefinable scents and balmy breaths. All around them was scenic beauty and peace, and yet with all their great love for each other, their hearts were heavy at the prospect of their future, which must be a life of banishment in India, and to the heaviness of Lennard was added indignation and sorrow.

But he could scarcely accuse himself of having acted rashly in the matter of his marriage, for to that his family would never have consented ; and he often thought could his mother but see Flora in her beauty and brightness, looking so charming in her smart sealskin and bewitching cap and feather, and long skirt of golden-brown silk that matched her hair and eyes—every way a most piquante-looking girl !

Young though he was, and though a second son, Lennard Melfort had been a favourite with more than one Belgravian belle and her mamma, and there were few who had not something pleasant or complimentary to say of him since his return from India. At balls, fêtes, garden and water parties, girls had given him the preference to many who seemed more eligible, had reserved for him dances on their programmes, sang for him, made unmistakable *avillades*, and so forth ; for his handsome figure and his position made him very acceptable, though he had not the prospects of his elder brother, the Hon. Cosmo.

Lady Fettercairn knew how Lennard was regarded and valued well, and nourished great hopes therefrom ; but this was all over and done with now.

To her it seemed as if he had thrown his very life away, and that when his marriage with a needy governess—however beautiful and well born she might be—became known, all that charmed and charming circle in Belgravia and Tyburnia would regard him as a black sheep indeed ; would shake their aristocratic heads, and pity poor Lord and Lady Fettercairn for having such a renegade son.

Flora's chief attendant—a Highland woman who had nursed her in infancy—was comically vituperative and indignant at the affront put by these titled folks upon 'her child,' as she called her.



Madelon Galbraith was strong, healthy, active, and only in her fortieth year, with black eyes and hair, a rich ruddy complexion, a set of magnificent white teeth, and her manner was full of emphatic, almost violent, gesticulation peculiar to many Highlanders, who seem to talk with their hands and arms quite as much as the tongue.

Sometimes Madelon spoke in her native Gaelic, but generally in the dialect of the Lowlands.

‘Set them up, indeed,’ she muttered; ‘wha are the Melforts o’ Fettercairn, that they should slight you—*laoghe mo chri*?’ she added softly (calf of my heart). ‘What a pity it is ye canna fling at their heads the gold they love, for even a Lowland dog winna yowl gin ye pelt him wi’ banes. But you’ve begun wi’ love and marriage, and a gude beginning mak’s a gude ending.’

‘But we shall be so poor, Nursie Madelon, and I have ruined my poor Lennard,’ urged Flora, as the kind woman caressed her.

‘They say a kiss and a cup of water mak’ but a wersh breakfast,’ laughed Madelon; ‘but you’re no sae puir as that comes to, my darling.’

‘Not quite,’ said Flora, laughing faintly, in turn. ‘Yet I have sorely injured my husband’s prospects.’

‘Tut, tut, my bairn. Ony man can woo, but he weds only whar his weird lies; and so Captain Melfort wedded you, and wha better? Then what is a lord that we should *lippen* to him? As long as ye serve a tod ye maun carry his tail. And your father’s daughter may carry her head wi’ the highest.’

Lennard Melfort now resolved neither verbally nor by letter to have further intercourse with his family at Craigengowan or elsewhere, but before he could make up his mind what to do, or could betake him south, as he meant to quit Scotland without delay, on the day subsequent to the stormy interview Madelon announced a visitor, and on a salver brought in a card inscribed—‘MR. KENNETH KIPPILAW, W.S.’

---

## CHAPTER III.

## THE SPURNED OFFER.

‘THE family agent from Edinburgh, Flora,’ said Lennard, in answer to her inquiring glance. ‘Mrs. Melfort,’ he added, introducing her to their visitor, who bowed with a critical glance and appreciative smile.

‘I have been telegraphed for by your father, Captain Melfort,’ said Mr. Kippilaw, as they shook hands and he was motioned to a chair.

A hale, hearty, unpretentious, business-like man, about forty years of age, Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw was too well-bred and too sensible to begin the matter in hand by any remarks about youthful imprudence, early marriages, or so forth, as he knew the pride and temperament of the young man before him, but laid down his hat, and, after some of that familiar weather talk, which is the invariable prelude to any conversation over all the British Isles, he gently approached the object of his mission, which Flora, in the simplicity and terror of her heart, never doubted was a separation of some kind between herself and Lennard, so with a pallid face she bowed and withdrew.

‘To what am I indebted for the pleasure of this—a—unexpected interview?’ asked Lennard, a little stiffly.

‘Instructions just received from your father, Captain Melfort.’

‘Then you have come from Craigengowan?’

‘Straight.’

‘Has he made up his mind to accept my wife as his daughter-in-law?’

‘Quite the reverse, I regret to say.’

Lennard’s face darkened with indignation, and he gave his moustache an angry twist.

‘Are my father and mother determined to ignore the fact that she is a lady by birth?’ asked Lennard, after a gloomy pause.

‘Yes; they know, of course, that she *is* a lady,’ stammered

Mr. Kippilaw, feeling his mission an ungracious one, 'but poor—one who has sunk into obscurity and dependence—pardon me, I but use their own identical words.'

'Well?'

'What is done in this instance, unfortunately, cannot be undone, Captain Melfort; but his lordship, feeling, of course, keenly in the matter, is willing to continue your allowance, and even to double it, on one condition.'

'Name it.'

Mr. Kippilaw sighed, for though, as a lawyer, considerably hardened, he felt the delicacy of the whole situation, and Lennard's dark eyes seemed to focus and pierce him.

'The condition—to the point!'

'Is—that you will return to India—'

'I mean to do so forthwith,' interrupted Lennard sharply.

'Or you may live anywhere out of Britain, but never attempt to intrude Mrs. Melfort upon your family or their circle, and contrive, if possible, to let that circle forget your existence.'

'Insolent—and cruel as insolent!' exclaimed Lennard Melfort as he started from his chair and paced about the room, with his dark eyes flashing and the veins in his forehead swollen like whip-cord.

'The words I speak are not my own,' said Mr. Kippilaw, deprecatingly.

'Return to Craigengowan, and tell my father that I reject his bribe to insult my wife—for a bribe it is—with the scorn it merits. Not a penny of his money will I accept while my sword and pay, or life itself, are left me. Tell Lord and Lady Fettercairn that I view myself as their son no more. As they discard me, so do I discard them; and even their *very name* I shall not keep—remember that!'

'Dear me—dear me, all this is very sad!'

'They have thrust me from them as if I had been guilty of a crime—'

'Captain Melfort!'

'A crime, I say—yet a day may come when they will repent it; and from this hour I swear—'



‘Not in anger,’ interrupted Mr. Kippilaw, entreatingly ; ‘take no hasty vow in your present temper.’

‘I swear that to them and theirs I shall be, from this hour, as one in the grave !’

‘But,’ urged the lawyer, ‘but suppose—which God forbid—that aught happened to your elder brother, Mr. Cosmo Melfort ?’

‘I wish Cosmo well ; but I care not for my interest in the title—it may become dormant, extinct, for aught that I care. Neither I nor any of mine shall ever claim it, nor shall I again set foot in Craigengowan, or on the lands around it—no, never again, never again !’

To every argument of the kind-hearted Mr. Kippilaw, who really loved the Fettercairn family and esteemed the high-spirited Lennard, the latter turned a deaf ear.

He departed in despair of softening matters between the rash son and indignant parents. To them he greatly modified the nature of the useless interview, but they heard of Lennard’s determination with perfect unconcern, and even with a grim smile of contempt, never doubting that when money pressure came upon him they would find him at their mercy. But that time never came.

Mr. Kippilaw returned to Edinburgh, and there the affair seemed to end.

The parting words of Lord Fettercairn to him were said smilingly and loftily :

‘The French have a little phrase, which in six words expresses all our experiences in life.’

‘And this phrase, my lord ?’

‘Is simply—*tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse*—that we outlive everything in turn and in time—and so this matter of Lennard’s pride will be a matter of time only. Be assured we shall outlive the indignation of our misguided son.’

‘But will you outlive your own ?’

‘Never !’

‘I can but hope that you will, my lord. Remember the hackneyed quotation from Pope—“To err is human, to forgive divine.”’

‘I never forgive!’ replied his lordship bitterly.

The name of Lennard was never uttered again by his parents, nor even by his brother Cosmo (then reading up at Oxford), till the hour for forgiveness was past; and even Cosmo they contrived to inoculate with their own cruel and unchristian sentiment of hostility. Lennard’s portrait was removed from its place of honour in the dining-hall and banished to the lumber-attic; the goods, chattels, and mementoes he left at home were scattered and dispersed; even his horses were sold, and the saddles he had used; and the Fettercairn family would—could they have done so—have obliterated his name from the great double-columned tome of Sir Bernard Burke.

Heedless of all that, the young husband and his dark-eyed girl-wife were all the world to each other.

‘After mamma followed papa to the grave, Lennard—for she never held up her head after she heard of his death at Khooshab,’ said Flora, as she nestled her head in his neck, ‘I seemed to be condemned to a life of hardship, humiliation, and heartlessness, till I met you, dearest. I felt that even the love of some dumb animal—a dog or a horse—was better than the entire absence of affection in the narrow circle of my life. I did so long for something or some one to love me exclusively—I felt so miserably, so utterly alone in the world. Now I have you—you to love me. But in winning you I have robbed you of the love of all your people.’

‘Talk not of it, and think not of it, dearest Flora. We are now more than ever all in all to each other.’

The money bribe, offered in such a way and for such a purpose, exasperated Lennard still more against his family, and drew many a tear of humiliation from Flora in secret.

She thought that she had wrought Lennard a great wrong by winning his love for herself, and she was now burning with impatience to turn her back on the shores of Britain and find a new home in India; and there, by staff or other employments and allowances, Lennard knew that he could gain more than the yearly sum his father so mortifyingly offered him.

Flora wept much over it all, we say, and her appetite be-

came impaired ; but she did not—like the heroine of a three-volume novel—starve herself into a fright.

But a short time before she had been a childish and simple maiden—one sorely tried, however, and crushed by evil fortune ; but with Lennard Melfort now, ‘the prince had come into her existence and awakened her soul, and she was a woman—innocent still—but yet a woman.’

The scenery of the Mearns looked inexpressibly lovely in the purity and richness of its verdure and varied artistic views, for the woods were profusely tinted with gold, russet brown, and red, when Lennard Melfort turned his back upon it and his native home for ever !

The birds were chirping blithely, and the voice of the corn-crake, with

‘The sweet strain that the corn-reapers sang,’

came on the evening breeze together. The old kirk bell was tolling in the distance, and its familiar sound spoke to Lennard’s heart of home like that of an old friend. The river was rolling under its great arch of some eighty feet in span, the downward reflection of the latter in the water making a complete circle like a giant O. The old castle of Halgreen, with its loopholed battlements of the fourteenth century, stood blackly and boldly upon its wave-beaten eminence, and the blue smoke of picturesque Gourdon, a fisher village, curled up on the ambient air, as the scenery faded out in the distance.

Flora became marvellously cheerful when their journey fairly began, and laughingly she sang in Lennard’s ear—

‘The world goes up and the world goes down,  
But *yesterday’s* smile and *yesterday’s* frown  
Can never come back again, sweet friend—  
Can never come back again !’

Means were not forgotten to support nurse Madelon in her native place, where we shall leave her till she reappears in our narrative again.

So Lennard and his girl-wife sailed for India, full of love



for each other and hope for their own lonely and unaided future, and both passed for ever out of the lives and apparently out of the memory of the family at Craigenowan.

Times there were when he hoped to distinguish himself, so that the circle there—those who had renounced him—would be proud of him; but in seeking that distinction rashly, he might throw away his life, and thus leave his little Flora penniless on the mercy of a cold world and a proverbially ungrateful Government.

But they could not forget home, and many a time and oft, where the sun-baked cantonments of Meerut seemed to vibrate under the fierce light of the Indian sun, where the temples of Hurdwar from their steep of marble steps look down upon the Ganges, or where the bungalows of Cawnpore or Etwah, garlanded with fragrant jasmine, stand by the rolling Jumna amid glorious oleanders and baubool trees, with their golden balls loading the air with perfume, while the giant heron stalked by the river's bed, the alligator basked in the ooze, and the Brahmin ducks floated overhead, Flora's sweet voice made Lennard's heart thrill as she sang to him the songs of the land they had resolved never to look upon again, even when that sound so stirring to the most sluggish Scottish breast when far away, the pipes of a Highland regiment, poured their notes on the hot, sunny air.

At home none seemed to care or think of the discarded son but the worthy lawyer, Kenneth Kippilaw, who had loved him as a lad, and could not get his hard fate out of his mind.

From time to time, inspired by kindness and curiosity, he watched his name among the captains in the military lists of that thick compendium which no Scottish business establishment is ever without—'Oliver and Boyd's Almanack.' Therein, after a while, the name of Lennard Melfort *disappeared*, but whether he was dead, had sold out, or 'gone to the bad,' the worthy Writer to the Signet could not discover, and he not unnaturally sighed over what he deemed a lost life.

And here we end that which is a species of prologue to our story.

## CHAPTER IV

## REVELSTOKE COTTAGE.

MORE than twenty years had elapsed after the episodes we have described, and Lennard and Flora had found a new home, and she, her *last one*, more than four hundred and fifty miles, as the crow flies, from where Craigengowan looks down on the German Sea. But none that looked on Lennard Melfort now would have recognised in the prematurely aged man the handsome young fellow who in ire and disgust had quitted his native land.

In two years after he had gone eastward a dreadful fever, contracted in a place where he had volunteered on a certain duty to gain money for the support of his wife and her little Indian establishment—the Terrai of Nepaul, that miasmatic border of prairie which lies along the great forest of the Himalayas, and has an evil repute even among the natives of the country in the wet season when the leaves are falling.

This fever broke Lennard's health completely, and so changed him that his rich brown hair and moustache were grey at six-and-twenty, and ere long he looked like a man of twice his age.

'Can that fellow really be Lennard Melfort of the Fusiliers? Why, he is a veritable Knight of the Rueful Countenance!' exclaimed some old friends who saw him at 'The Rag,' when he came home to seek a place of quiet and seclusion in Devonshire, as it subsequently chanced to be.

Amid the apple bowers of the land of cider, and near a beautiful little bay into which the waters of the British Channel rippled, stood the pretty and secluded cottage he occupied, as 'Major MacIan,' with his son and a nephew.

The wooded hills around it were not all covered with orchards, however, and the little road that wound round the bay ran under eminences that, from their aspect, might make a tourist think he was skirting a Swiss lake. Others were heath-clad, and fringed at the base by a margin of grey rocks.

Into the bay flowed a stream, blue and transparent always. Here salmon-trout were often found, and the young men spent hours at its estuary angling for rock-fish.

A Devonshire cottage is said by Mrs. Bray to be 'the sweetest object that the poet, the artist, or the lover of the romantic could desire to see,' and such a cottage was that of Major Mac-Ian, the name now adopted by Lennard—that of Flora's father—in fulfilment of the vow he had made to renounce the name, title, and existence of his family.

Around it, and in front sloping down to the bay, was a beautiful garden, teeming with the flowers and fruits of Devonshire. On three sides was a rustic verandah, the trellis-work of which was covered by a woven clematis, sweetbriar, and Virginia creeper, which, in the first year of her residence there, Flora's pretty hands, cased in garden gloves, were never tired of tending; and now the Virginia creeper, with its luxuriant tendrils, emerald green in summer, russet and red in autumn, grew in heavy masses over the roof and around the chimney stalks, making it, as Flora was wont to say exultingly, 'quite a love of a place!'

On one hand lay the rolling waters of the Channel, foaming about the Mewstone Rock; on the other, a peep was given amid the coppice of the ancient church of Revelstoke, and here the married pair lived happily and alone for a brief time.

Save for the advent of a ship passing in sight of the little bay, it was a sleepy place in which Lennard, now retired as a major, had 'pitched his tent,' as he said—the Cottage of Revelstoke. Even in these railway times people thereabout were content with yesterday's news. There was no gas to spoil the complexions of the young, and no water rates to 'worrit' the old; and telegrams never came, in their orange-tinted envelopes, to startle the hearts of the feeble and the sickly.

No monetary transactions having taken place, and no correspondence being necessary, between Lennard and his family or their legal agent, Mr. Kippilaw, for more than twenty years now, he had quite passed away from their knowledge, and almost from their memory; and many who knew them once cared



not, perhaps, whether he or his wife were in the land of the living.

A son, we have said, had been born to them, and Lennard named the child Florian, after his mother (here again ignoring his own family), whom that event cost dear, for the sweet and loving Flora never recovered her health or strength—injured, no doubt, in India—but fell into a decline, and, two years after, passed away in the arms of Lennard and her old nurse Madelon. Lonely, lonely indeed, did the former feel now, though an orphan nephew of Flora—the son of her only sister—came to reside with him—Shafto Gyle by name—one who will figure largely in our story.

Would Lennard ever forget the day of her departure, when she sank under that wasting illness with which no doctor could grapple?

Ever and always he could recall the sweet but pallid face, the white, wasted hands, the fever-lighted dark eyes, which seemed so unnaturally large when, after one harrowing night of pain and delirium, she became gentle and quiet, and lovingly told him to take a little rest—for old-looking he was; old, worn, and wasted far beyond his years—and he obeyed her, saying he would take a little turn in the garden among the roses—the roses her hands would tend no more—sick at heart with the closeness of the sick-chamber and all it suggested, and maddened by the loud ticking of the watchful doctor's repeater as it lay on a table littered with useless phials; and now, ere he had been ten minutes in the sunny morning air, amid the perfume of the roses, he was wildly summoned by Madelon Galbraith, with white cheeks and affrighted eyes, back to the chamber of death it proved to be; for it was on the brow of Death he pressed his passionate kisses, and to ears that could hear no more he uttered his heartrending entreaties that she would not leave him, or would give him one farewell word; and ever after would the perfume of roses be associated in his mind with that morning—the most terrible one of his life!

Beside Revelstoke Church—old, picturesque, and rendered comely by a wealth of luxuriant ivy that Time has wreathed

around its hoary walls to flutter in the sea breeze—she was laid, and the heart of Lennard seemed to be buried with her.

• It is a lonely old building, spotted with lichens, worn by storms, and perched upon the verge of a low, rocky cliff, up which the salt spray comes at times to the burial-ground. It is near the end of Mothcombe Bay, where the shore makes a turn to the southward.

Not a house is near it, the solitary hills and waves encompass it, and it is said that its smouldering tombstones would furnish ample matter for the ‘meditations’ of a Hervey. So there Flora was laid, and there Lennard was to be laid by her side when the time came.

Her death hardened his heart more than ever against his own family, and he began almost to forget that he ever bore any other name than hers—his adopted one.

In the kindness of his heart, the major, as the lads—his son and nephew—grew up together, introduced *both* to neighbours and strangers equally as his sons, but most unwisely, as we shall ere long have to record.

Neither to Florian nor to Shafto Gyle did he reveal his real name, or the story of the quarrel with his family and their work; thus in and about Revelstoke all three passed under the name of MacIan now.

Madelon Galbraith, who had attended her mistress on her death-bed and nursed her baby into boyhood, had now gone back to her native glen in the wilds of Ross. She proved, Lennard found, somewhat unfitted for the locality of Revelstoke, as her ways and ideas were foreign to those of the folks thereabouts; but she will have a prominent place in our story in the future.

But long, long Madelon wept over Florian, and pressed him often to her breast—‘the baby of her bairn,’ as she had called him—for as she had nursed him, so had she nursed his mother before him in the days when the victorious Ross-shire Buffs set up their tents at Khooshab, on the plains of Persia.

‘Gude-bye, calf of my heart,’ were her parting words; ‘I’ll see ye yet again, Florian. If it were na for hope, the heart wad break!’

## CHAPTER V.

## DULCIE.

ALL trace of Lennard Melfort had been obliterated at Craighengowan, we have said. He was never mentioned there, and though his family tried to think of him as dead, they did not quite succeed; but the disappearance of his name from the Army List first excited a little speculation, but no inquiry, until a terrible event occurred.

The eldest son, the Hon. Cosmo, married the daughter of Lady Drumshoddy, thus securing her thousands, and did his best to console Lord and Lady Fettercairn for 'the disgrace' brought upon them by Lennard, and they regarded him quite as a model son.

He shone as Chairman at all kinds of county meetings; became M.P. for a cluster of northern burghs, and was a typical Scottish member, mightily interested when such grand Imperial matters as the gravelling of Park Lane, the ducks on the Serpentine, and the improvements at Hyde Park Corner were before the House, but was oblivious of all Scottish interests, or that such a place as Scotland existed. When she wanted—like other parts of the empire—but never got them—grants for necessary purposes, the Hon. Cosmo was mute as a fish, or if he spoke, it was to record his vote against them.

Lennard saw in a chance newspaper, and with natural grief and dismay, that Cosmo had come to an untimely end when deer-stalking near Glentilt. He had wounded a large stag, the captain of its herd, and approached rashly or incautiously when the infuriated animal was at bay. It broke its bay, attacked him in turn, and ere the great shaggy hounds could tear it down, Cosmo was trampled under foot and gored to death by its horns.

As Lennard read, his sad mind went to the scene where that death must have happened, under mighty Ben-y-gloe, where



the kestrel builds his nest and the great mountain eagle has his eyrie, and the Tilt comes thundering down over its precipices of grey rock. Never again would his eyes rest on such glorious scenes as these.

Cosmo had left a little daughter, Finella, who took up her abode with her grandparents at Craigengowan, but no son, and Lennard knew that by this tragedy he was now the heir to the peerage; but he only gave a bitter sigh as he thought of Flora in her grave, and made no sign.

‘Poor Cosmo,’ he muttered, and forgetting for a time much that had occurred, and how completely Cosmo had leagued with father and mother against him, his memory went back to the pleasant days of their happy boyhood, when they rode, fished, and shot together, shared the same bedroom in Craigengowan and conned their tasks from the same books.

‘Well, well,’ he added, ‘all that is over and done with long, long ago.’

He made no sign, we say, but let time pass by, not foreseeing the complications that were eventually to rise by his doing so.

Florian, born two years after the adoption of Shafto Gyle in his infancy, always regarded and looked up to the latter as a species of elder brother and undoubted senior.

In his twentieth year Florian was really a handsome fellow, and if, without absurdity, the term ‘beautiful’ could be applied to a young man, he was so, in his perfect manliness. Tall in figure, hard and well developed in muscle, regular in features, he had clear, dark, honest eyes, with lashes like a girl’s, and a dark, silky moustache,

Shafto’s face was in some respects handsome too, but an evil one to look at, in one way. His fair eyebrows were heavy, and had a way of meeting in a dark frown when he was thinking. His pale grey eyes were shifty, and were given him, like his tongue, to conceal rather than express his thoughts, for they were sharp and cunning. His nostrils were delicate, and, like his thin lips, suggestive of cruelty, while his massive jaw and thick neck were equally so—we must say almost to brutality.

They were rather a contrast, these two young men—a

contrast no less great in their dispositions and minds than in their outward appearance. They were so dissimilar—one being dark and the other fair—that no one would have taken them for brothers, as they were generally supposed to be, so affectionate was the Major to both, and both bearing his name in the locality.

As a schoolboy Shafto had won an unpleasant reputation for jockeying his companions, 'doing' them out of toys, sweetmeats, marbles, and money, and for skilfully shifting punishments on the wrong shoulders when opportunity offered, and not unfrequently on those of the unsuspecting Florian.

From some of his proclivities, the Major thought Shafto would make a good attorney, and so had him duly installed in the office of Lewellen Carlyon, the nearest village lawyer, while for his own boy, Florian, he had higher hopes and aspirations, to make him, like himself, a soldier; but though far from idle, or lacking application, Florian failed, under the insane high-pressure system of 'cramming,' to pass, and not a few—Shafto particularly—laid it to the account of a certain damsel, Dulcie by name, who was supposed, with some truth, to occupy too much of his thoughts.

Disgusted by the result of his last 'exam.,' Florian would at once have enlisted, like so many others who rush as privates for commissions nowadays; but his father's fast-failing health, his love for Dulcie Carlyon, and the desperate but 'Micawber'-like hope that 'something would turn up,' kept him hanging on day by day aimlessly at Revelstoke, without even the apparent future that had opened to Shafto when elevated to a high stool in Lawyer Carlyon's office.

As time went on, Lennard Melfort (or MacIan, as he called himself), though he had a high appreciation of Shafto's sense, turn for business, to all appearance, cleverness, and strength of character, turned with greater pleasure to his own son Florian, whose clear open brow and honest manly eyes bore nature's unmistakable impress of a truer nobility than ever appertained to the truculent and anti-national lords of Fettercairn.

Though to all appearance the best of friends before the world, the cousins were rivals ; but as Florian was the successful lover, Shafto had a good basis for bitterness, if not secret hate.

In common with the few neighbours who were in that sequestered quarter, the lawyer liked the Major—he was so gentle, suave, retiring in manner, and courteously polite. He liked Florian too, but deemed him idle, and there his liking ended.

He took Shafto into his office at the Major's urgent request, as a species of apprentice, but he—after the aphorism of 'Dr. Fell'—did not much affect the young man, though he found him sharp enough—too sharp at times ; and, like most of the neighbours, he never cared to inquire into the precise relationship of the Major and the two lads, both of whom from boyhood had called the latter 'Papa.'

Dulcie Carlyon was the belle of the limited circle in which she moved, and a very limited circle it was ; but she was pretty enough to have been the belle of a much larger orbit ; for she was the very ideal of a sweet, bright English girl, now nearly in her eighteenth year, and the boy and girl romance in the lives of her and Florian had lasted since they were children and play-mates together, and they seemed now to regard each other with 'the love that is given once in lifetime.'

'Could I but separate these two !' muttered Shafto, as with eyes full of envy and evil he watched one of their meetings, amid the bushes that fringed an old quarry not far from Revelstoke Church.

From the summit where he lurked there was a magnificent view of the sea and the surrounding country. On one hand lay the lonely old church and all the solitary hills that overlook its wave-beaten promontory ; on the other were the white-crested waves of the British Channel, rolling in sunshine ; but Shafto saw only the face and figure of Dulcie Carlyon, who was clad just as he was fond of picturing her, in a jacket of navy blue, fastened with gilt buttons, and a skirt with clinging folds of the same—a costume which invests an English girl with an air equally nautical and coquettish. Dulcie's dresses



always fitted her exquisitely, and her small head, with smart hat and feather, set gracefully on her shapely shoulders, had just a *soupeçon* of pride in its contour and bearing.

Slender in figure, with that lovely flower-like complexion which is so peculiarly English, Dulcie had regular and delicate features, with eyes deeply and beautifully blue, reddish-golden hair, a laughing mouth that some thought too large for perfect beauty, but it was fully redeemed by its vivid colour and faultless teeth.

‘Could I but separate them!’ muttered Shafto, through his clenched teeth, while their murmured words and mutual caresses maddened him.

Dulcie was laughingly kissing a likeness in an open locket which Florian had just given her—a likeness, no doubt, of himself—and she did so repeatedly, and ever and anon held it admiringly at arm’s-length. Then she closed it, and Florian clasped the flat silver necklet to which it was attached round her slender white throat; and with a bright, fond smile she concealed it among the lace frilling of her collerette, and let the locket for security drop into the cleft of her bosom, little foreseeing the part it was yet to play in her life.

Shafto’s face would not have been pleasant to look upon as he saw this episode, and his shifty grey eyes grew pea-green in hue as he watched it.

‘Oh, Dulcie!’ exclaimed Florian, with a kind of boyish rapture, as he placed a hand on each of her shoulders and gazed into her eyes, ‘I am most terribly in love with you.’

‘Why should there be any terror in it?’ asked Dulcie, with a sweet silvery laugh.

‘Well, I feel so full of joy in having your love, and being always with you, that—that a fear comes over me lest we should be some day parted.’

‘Who can part us but ourselves?’ said she with a pretty pout, while her long lashes drooped.

‘Dulcie,’ said he, after a little pause, ‘have you ever had an emotion that comes uncalled for—that which people call a presentiment?’

‘Yes ; often.’

‘Has it ever come true ?’

‘Sometimes.’

‘Well—I have a presentiment this evening, which tells me that something is about to happen to me—to us—and very soon too !’

‘What can happen to us—we are so happy ?’ said Dulcie, her blue eyes dilating.

Did the vicinity of Shafto, though unknown to Florian, mysteriously prompt this thought—this boding fear ? Shafto heard the words, and a strange smile spread over his face as he shook his clenched hand at the absorbed pair, and stole away from his hiding-place, leaving two foolish hearts full of a foolish dream from which they might be roughly awakened—leaving the happy Florian with that sweet and winsome Dulcie whom he loved, and with whom he had played even as a child ; with whom he had shared many a pot of clotted cream ; with whom he had fished for trout in the Erme and Yealm ; explored with fearful steps and awe-stricken heart the cavern there, where lie thick the fossil bones of the elephant, hyena, and wolf ; and wandered for hours by the moors, among mossy rocks and mossy trees, and in woody labyrinthine lanes, and many a time and oft by the sea shore, where the cliffs are upheaved and contorted in a manner beyond description, but so loosely bound together that waves rend them asunder, and shape them into forms like ruined castles and stranded ships ; till, as years went on, heart had spoken to heart ; boy and girl life had been left behind, and that dream-time came in which they seemed to live for years.

No one could accuse Dulcie Carlyon of coquetry, her nature was too truthful and open for that : thus she had never for a moment wavered in her preference between Florian and Shafto, and spent with the former those bright and hopeful hours that seldom come again with the same keen intensity in a lifetime, though often clouded by vague doubts.

As yet they had led a kind of Paul and Virginia life, without very defined ideas of their future ; in fact, perhaps scarcely considering what that future might be.

They only knew, like the impassioned boy and girl in the beautiful story of Bernardin St. Pierre, that they loved each other dearly, and for the sweet present that sufficed; while cunning Shafto Gyle looked darkly, gloomily, and enviously on them.

Perhaps it was his fast failing health that prevented Lennard Melfort from looking more closely into this matter, or it may be that he remembered the youthful love of his own heart; for he could never forget her whom he was so soon to join now, and who, 'after life's fitful fever,' slept by the grey wall of Revelstoke, within sound of the restless sea.

Dulcie's father, Lawyer Carlyon, heard rumours of these meetings and rambles, and probably liked them as little as the Major did; but he was a busy man, absorbed in his work, and had been used to seeing the pair together since they were toddling children. Lennard, perhaps, thought it was as well to let them alone, as nothing would come of it, while the lawyer treated it surlily as a kind of joke.

'Why, Dulcie, my girl,' said he one day, 'what is to be the end of all this philandering but spoiling your own market, perhaps? Do you expect a young fellow to marry you who has no money, no prospects, no position in the world?'

'Position he has,' said poor Dulcie, blushing painfully, for though an only and motherless child she stood in awe of her father.

'Position—a deuced bad one, I think!'

'The other items will come in time, papa,' said Dulcie, laughing now.

'When?'

Dulcie was silent, and—for the first time in her life—thought sadly, 'Yes, when!' But she pressed a pretty white hand upon the silver locket in her bosom, as if to draw courage therefrom as from an amulet.

'Why, lass, he can't keep even the roof of a *cob* cottage over your head.'

'Well, papa, remember our hopeful Devonshire proverb—a good *cob*, a good hat and shoes, and a good heart last for ever.'

'Right, lass, and a good heart have you, my darling,' said



Mr. Carlyon, kissing her peach-like cheek, for he was a kind and good-hearted man, though somewhat rough in his exterior, and more like a grazier than a lawyer. 'You are both too young to know what you are talking about. He'll be going away, however—can't live always on his father, and *he*, poor fellow won't last long. The fancy of you both will wear itself out, like any other summer flirtation—I had many such in my time,' he added, with a chuckle, 'and got safely over them all. So will you, lass, and marry into some good family, getting a husband that will give you a comfortable home—for instance, Joe Holbeton, with his pits of Bovey coal.'

Poor little Dulcie shivered, and could scarcely restrain her tears at the hard, practical suggestions of her father. Hard-featured, stout, and grizzled Joe Holbeton *versus* her handsome Florian !

Her father spoke, too, of his probable 'going away.' Was this the presentiment to which her lover had referred? It almost seemed so.

In the sunset she went forth into the garden to work with her wools, and even to have a 'good cry' over what her father had said ; but in this she was prevented by suddenly finding Shafto stretched on the grass at her feet under a pine chestnut tree—Shafto, whom she could only tolerate for Florian's sake.

'Why do you stare at me so hard, Shafto?' she asked, with unconcealed annoyance.

'Staring, was I?'

'Yes, like an owl.'

'I always like to see girls working.'

'Indeed?'

'And the work, what do you call it?'

'Crewel work. And you like to see us busy?'

'Yes, especially when the work is done by hands so pretty and white.'

'As mine, you mean, of course?'

'Yes, Dulcie. How you do bewilder a fellow?'

'Don't begin as usual to pay me clumsy compliments, Shafto, or I shall quit the garden,' said Dulcie, her blue eyes

looking with a half-frightened, half-defiant expression into the keen, shifty, and pale-grey ones of Shafto, who was somewhat given to persecuting her.

He could see the outline of the locket with every respiration of her bosom. Could he but possess himself of it, thought he, as he proceeded to fill his meerschaum pipe.

‘I thought gentlemen did not smoke in ladies’ society unless with permission,’ said Dulcie.

‘Never bother about that, little one, please. But may I smoke?’

‘Yes.’

‘Thanks; this is jolly,’ said he, looking up at her with eyes full of admiration. ‘I feel like Hercules at the feet of Omphale.’

‘I don’t know who he was, or what you feel, but do you know what you look like?’

‘No.’

‘Shall I tell you?’ asked Dulcie, her eyes sparkling with mischief.

‘Yes.’

‘Well, like the Athenian weaver, Bottom, with his ass’s head, at the feet of Titania. “Dost like the picture?”’

Shafto eyed her spitefully, all the more so that Dulcie laughed merrily, showing all her pearly teeth at her reply.

‘Oho, this comes of rambling in quarries,’ said he, bluntly and coarsely; ‘doing the Huguenot business, the *pose* of Millais’ picture. Bosh! What can you and he mean?’

‘Millais and I?’

‘No; you and Florian!’

‘Mean!’ exclaimed Dulcie, her sweet face growing very pale in spite of herself at the bluntness of Shafto, and the unmistakable anger of his tone and bearing.

‘Yes—with your tomfoolery.’

‘How?—why?’

‘Penniless as you are—he at least.’

‘Good evening, Shafto; you are very unpleasant, to say the least of it,’ said Dulcie, as she gathered up her wools and sailed into the house, while his eyes followed her with a menacing and very ugly expression indeed.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE SECRET PACKET.

THE broken health brought by Lennard from the miasmatic Terai of Nepaul was rapidly becoming more broken than ever, and though not yet fifty, he was a premature old man, and it seemed as if the first part of Florian's presentiment or prevision of coming sorrow would soon be fulfilled.

His steps became very feeble, and he could only get about, in the autumn sunshine, with the aid of a stick and Florian's arm; and the latter watched him with grief and pain, tottering like the aged, panting and leaning heavily on his cane, as ever and anon he insisted on being led up a steep slope from which he could clearly see the old church of Revelstoke on its wave-beaten promontory, overlooked by sad and solitary hills, and his hollow eyes glistened as he gazed on it, with a kind of yearning expression, as if he longed to be at peace, and by the side of her he had laid there, it seemed long years ago—a lifetime ago.

Poor Lennard was certainly near his tomb, and all who looked upon him thought so; yet his calm eye, ever looking upward, betrayed no fear.

One day, when Florian was absent—no doubt sketching, boating with Dulcie on the Yealm, or idling with her on the moors—Lennard besought Shafto to stay beside him as he sat feeble and languid in his easy chair, sinking with the wasting and internal fever, with which the country practitioners were totally incapable of grappling; and on this day, for the first time, he began to speak to him of Scotland and the home he once had there; and he was listened to with the keenest interest by Shafto, who had ever—even as a child—been cunning, selfish, and avaricious, yet wonderfully clever and complaisant in his uncle's prejudiced eyes, as he remembered only Flora's dead and devoted sister.



'I have been thinking over old times and other days, Shafto, said he, with his attenuated hands crossed on the head of his bamboo cane; 'and, all things considered, it seems an occupation I had better avoid did the memory concern myself alone: but I must think of others and their interests—of Florian and of you—so I can't help it, boy, in my present state of health, or rather want of health,' he added, as a violent fit of spasmodic coughing came upon him.

After a pause he spoke again.

'You, Shafto, are a couple of years older than Florian, and are, in many ways, several years older in thought and experience by the short training you have received in Carlyon's office.'

The Major paused again, leaving Shafto full of wonder and curiosity as to what this preamble was leading up to.

The former had begun to see things more clearly and temperately with regard to the sudden death of Cosmo, and to feel that, though he had renounced all family ties, name, and wealth, so far as concerned himself, to die, with the secret of all untold, would be to inflict a cruel wrong on Florian. At one time Lennard thought of putting his papers and the whole matter in the hands of Mr. Lewellen Carlyon, and it was a pity he did not do so, instead of choosing to entrust them to his long-headed nephew.

'Hand here my desk, and unlock it for me—my hands are so tremulous,' said he.

When this was done he selected a packet from a private drawer, and briefly and rapidly told the story of his life, his proper name, and rank to Shafto, who listened with open-eyed amazement.

When the latter had thoroughly digested the whole information, he said, after a long pause:

'This must be told to Florian!'

And with Florian came the thought of Dulcie, and how this sudden accession of her lover to fortune and position would affect her.

'Nay, Shafto—not yet—not till I am gone—a short time

now. I can trust you, with your sharpness and legal acumen, with the handling of this matter entirely. When I am gone, and laid beside your Aunt Flora, by the wall of the old church yonder,' he continued with a very broken voice—one almost a childish treble, 'you will seek the person to whom this packet is addressed, Kenneth Kippilaw, a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh—he is alive still; place these in his hands, and he will do all that is required; but treasure them, Shafto—be careful of them as you would of your soul's salvation—for my sake, and more than all for the sake of Florian! Now, my good lad, give me the composing draught—I feel sleepy and so weary with all this talking, and the thoughts that have come unbidden—unbidden, sad, bitter, and angry thoughts—to memory.'

Shafto locked the desk, put it aside, and giving his uncle the draught, stole softly away to his own room with the papers, to con them over and to—think!

He had not sat at a desk for three years in Lawyer Carlyon's office without having his wits sharpened. He paused as he put the documents away.

'Stop—stop—let me think, let me consider!' he exclaimed to himself, and he certainly did consider to some purpose. He was cold and calculating; he was never unusually agitated or flustered, but he became both with the thoughts that occurred to him now.

Among the papers and letters entrusted to him were the certificates of the marriage of Lennard and Flora, and another which ran thus:

'Certificate of entry of birth, under section 37 of 17 and 18 Vict., cap. 80.' It authenticated the birth of their child Florian at Revelstoke, with the date thereof to a minute.

These documents were enclosed in a letter written in a tremulous and uncertain hand by Lennard Melfort to Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw, part of which was in these terms:

'The child was baptized by a neighbouring clergyman—the Rev. Paul Pentreath—who has faithfully kept the promise of secrecy he gave me, and, dying as I now feel myself to be, I pray earnestly that my father and mother will be kind to my

orphan son. Let them not—as they one day hope for mercy at that dread throne before which I am soon to appear—visit upon his innocent head my supposed and most heavily punished offence. Let him succeed in poor Cosmo's place to that which is his due; let him succeed to all I renounced in anger—an anger that has passed away, for now, my dear old friend, I am aged beyond my years, and my hair is now white as snow through ill-health contracted in India, where, to procure money necessary for my poor Flora, I volunteered on desperate service, and in seasons destructive to existence. In your hands I leave the matter with perfect hope and confidence. The bearer will tell you all more that may be necessary.'

After having read, reread, and made himself thoroughly master of the contents of this to him certainly most astounding packet, he requested the Major to re-address it in his own tremulous and all but illegible handwriting, and seal it up with his long-disused signet ring, which bore the arms of Fettercairn.

Prior to having all this done, Shafto had operated on one of the documents most dexterously and destructively with his penknife!

'A peerage! a peerage!—rank, wealth, money, mine—all mine!' he muttered under his breath, as he stored the packet away in a sure and secret place, and while whistling softly to himself, a way he had when brooding (as he often did) over mischief, he recalled the lines of Robert Herrick:

'Our life is like a narrow raft,  
Afloat upon the hungry sea;  
Hereon is but a little space,  
And all men, eager for a place,  
Do thrust each other in the sea.'

'So why should I not thrust *him* into the hungry briny? If life is a raft—and, by Jove, I find it so!—why should one not grasp at all one can, and make the best of life for one's self, by making the worst of it for other folks? Does such a chance of winning rank and wealth come often to any one's hands? No! and I should be the biggest of fools—the most enormous



of idiots—not to avail myself to the fullest extent. I see my little game clearly, but must play warily. “Eat, drink, and be merry,” says Isaiah, “for to-morrow we die.” They say the devil can quote Scripture, and so can Shafto Gyle. But I don’t mean to die to-morrow, but to have a jolly good spell for many a year to come!’

And in the wild exuberance of his spirits he tossed his hat again and again to the ceiling.

From that day forward the health of Lennard Melfort seemed to decline more rapidly, and ere long he was compelled by the chill winds of the season to remain in bed, quite unable to take his place at table or move about, save when wheeled in a chair to the window, where he loved to watch the setting sun.

Then came one evening when, for the last time, he begged to be propped up there in his pillowed chair. The sun was setting over Ravelstoke Church, and throwing its picturesque outline strongly forward, in a dark indigo tint, against the golden and crimson flush of the west, and all the waves around the promontory were glittering in light.

But Lennard saw nothing of all this, though he felt the feeble warmth of the wintry sun as he stretched his thin, worn hands towards it; his eyesight was gone, and would never come again! There was something very pathetic in the withered face and sightless eyes, and the drooping white moustache that had once been a rich dark brown, and waxed *à l’Empereur*.

His dream of life was over, and his last mutterings were a prayer for Florian, on whose breast his head lay as he breathed his last.

The two lads looked at each other in that supreme moment—but with very different thoughts in their hearts. Florian felt only desolation, blank and utter, and even Shafto, in the awful presence of Death, felt alone in the world.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

## A FAREWELL.

As he lay dead, that old-looking, wasted, and attenuated man, whose hair was like the thistledown, none would have recognised in him the dark-haired, bronzed, and joyous young subaltern who, only twenty-four years before, had led his company at the storming of the Redan, who had planted the scaling-ladder against the scarp, and shouted, in a voice heard even amid the roar of the adverse musketry :

‘Come on, men ! ladders to the front, eight men per ladder ; up and at them, lads, with the bayonet,’ and fought his way into an embrasure, while round-shot tore up the earth beneath his feet, and men were swept away in sections of twenty ; or the hardy soldier who faced fever and foes alike in the Terai of Nepaul.

How still and peaceful he lay now as the coffin-lid was closed over him !

Snow-flakes, light and feathery, fell on the hard ground, and the waves seemed to leap and sob heavily round the old church of Revelstoke, when Lennard Melfort was laid beside the now old and flattened grave of Flora, and keen and sharp the frosty wind lifted the silver hair of the Rev. Paul Pentreath, whistled among the ivy or on the buttresses, and fluttered the black ribbon of the pall held by Florian, who felt as one in a dreadful dream—amid a dread and unreal phantasmagoria ; and the same wind seemed to twitch angrily the pall-ribbon from the hand of Shafto, nor could he by any effort recover it, as more than one present, with their Devonian superstition, remarked, and remembered when other things came to pass.

At last all was over ; the mourners departed, and Lennard Melfort was left alone—alone with the dead of yesterday and of ages ; and Florian, while Dulcie was by his side and pressed his hand, strove to commit to memory the curate’s words from

the Book of Revelation, 'There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor sighing; for God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

Shafto now let little time pass before he proceeded to inform Florian of what he called their 'relative position,' and of their journey into Scotland to search out Mr. Kippilaw.

It has been said that in life we have sometimes moments so full of emotion that they seem to mark a turn in it we can never reach again; and this sharp turn, young and startled Florian seemed to pass, when he learned that since infancy he had been misled, and that the man, so tender and so loving, whom he had deemed their father was but his uncle!

How came it all to pass *now*? Yet the old Major had ever been so kind and affectionate to him—to both, in fact, equally so, treating them as his sons—that he felt only a stunning surprise, a crushing grief and bitter mortification, but not a vestige of anger; his love for the dead was too keen and deep for that.

The packet, sealed and addressed to Mr. Kippilaw, though its contents were as yet unknown to him, seemed to corroborate the strange intelligence of Shafto; but the question naturally occurred to Florian, 'For what end or purpose had this lifelong mystery and change in their positions been brought about?'

He asked this of Shafto again and again.

'It seems we have been very curiously deluded,' said that personage, not daring to look the sorrowful Florian straight in the face, and pretended to be intent on stuffing his pipe.

'Deluded—how?'

'How often am I to tell you,' exclaimed Shafto, with petulance and assumed irritation, 'that the contents of this packet prove that I am the only son of Major Melfort (not MacIan at all), and that you—you——'

'What?'

'Are Florian Gyle, the nephew—adopted as a son. Mr. Kippilaw will tell you all about it.'

'And you, Shafto?' queried Florian, scarcely knowing, in his bewilderment, what he said.



‘Mean to go in for my proper position—my title, and all that sort of thing, don’t you see?’

‘And act—how!’

‘Not the proverbial beggar on horseback, I hope. I’ll do something handsome for you, of course.’

‘I want nothing done for me while I have two hands, Shafto.’

‘As you please,’ replied the latter, puffing vigorously at his pipe. ‘I have had enough of hopeless drudgery for a quarterly pittance in the dingy office of old Carlyon,’ said he, after a long pause; ‘and, by all the devils, I’ll have no more of it now that I am going to be rich.’

Indeed, from the day of Lennard Melfort entrusting him with the packet, Shafto had done little else at the office but study the laws of succession in Scotland and England.

‘How much you love money, Shafto!’ said Florian, eyeing him wistfully.

‘Do I? Well, I suppose that comes from having had so precious little of it in my time. I am a poor devil just now, but,’ thought he exultantly, ‘this “plant” achieved successfully, how many matrons with daughters unmarried will all be anxious to be mother to me! And Dulcie Carlyon I might have for asking; but I’ll fly at higher game now, by Jove!’

As further credentials, Shafto now possessed himself of Major Melfort’s sword, commissions, and medals, while Florian looked in blank dismay and growing mortification—puzzled by the new position in which he found himself, of being no longer his father’s son—a source of unfathomable mystery.

Shafto was in great haste to be gone, to leave Revelstoke and its vicinity behind him. It was too late for regrets or repentance now. Not that he felt either, we suppose; and what he had done he would do again, if there was no chance of being found out. In the growing exuberance of his spirits, he could not help, a day or two after, taunting Florian about Dulcie till they were on the verge of a quarrel, and wound up by saying, with a scornful laugh:

‘You can’t marry her—a fellow without a shilling in the world; and I wouldn’t *now*, if she would have me, which I don’t doubt.’

Poor Dulcie ! She heard with undisguised grief and astonishment of these events, and of the approaching departure of the cousins.

The cottage home was being broken up ; the dear old Major was in his grave ; and Florian, the playmate of her infancy, the lover of her girlhood, was going away—she scarcely knew to where. They might be permitted to correspond by letter, but when, thought Dulcie—oh, *when* should they meet again ?

The sun was shedding its light and warmth around her as usual, on woodland and hill, on wave and rock ; but both seemed to fade out, the perfume to pass from the early spring flowers, the glory from land and sea, and a dim mist of passionate tears clouded the sweet and tender blue eyes of the affectionate girl.

He would return, he said, as he strove to console her ; but how and when, and to what end ? thought both so despairingly. Their future seemed such a vague, a blank one !

‘I am penniless, Dulcie—a beggar on the face of the earth—twice beggared now, I think !’ exclaimed Florian, in sorrowing bitterness.

‘Don’t speak thus,’ said she imploringly, with piteous lips that were tremulous as his own, and her eyes drowned in tears.

They had left the road now, and wandered among the trees in a thicket, and seated themselves on a fallen trunk, a seat and place endeared to them, and familiar enough in past time.

He gazed into her eyes of deep pansy-blue, as if his own were striving to take away a memory of her face—a memory that would last for eternity.

‘And you really go to-night ?’ she asked, in piteous and broken accents.

‘Yes—with Shafto. I am in a fever, darling, to seek out a position for myself. Surely Shafto may assist me in that—though I shrink from asking him.’

‘Your own cousin ?’

‘Yes—but sometimes he looks like a supplanter now, and his bearing has been so unpleasant to me, especially of late,’

said Florian. 'But you will wait for me, Dulcie, and not be persuaded to marry anyone else?' he added imploringly, as he clasped each of her hands in his.

'I shall wait for you, Florian, if it should be for twenty years!' exclaimed the girl, in a low and emphatic voice, scarcely considering the magnitude and peril of such a promise.

'Thank you, darling Dulcie!' said he, bending down and kissing her lips with ardour, and, though on the eve of parting, they felt almost happy in the confidence of the blissful present.

'How often shall I recall this last meeting by the fallen tree, when you are far, far away from Revelstoke and—me!' said Dulcie.

'You will often come here to be reminded of me?'

'Do you think, Florian, I will require to be reminded of you?' asked the girl, with a little tone of pain in her sweet voice, as she kissed the silver locket containing his likeness, and all the sweet iteration of lover-talk, promises, and pledges went on for a time, and new hopes began to render this last interview more bearable to the young pair who were on the eve of separation, without any very distinct arrangement about correspondence in the interval of it.

The sun was setting now redly, and amid dun winter clouds, beaming on each chimney-head, on Revelstoke Church, and the leafless tree-tops his farewell radiance.

Florian took a long, long kiss from Dulcie, and with the emotion of a wrench in his heart, was gone, and she was alone.

A photo and a lock of red-golden hair were all that remained to him of her—both to be looked upon again and again, till his eyes ached, but never grew weary.

Dulcie's were very red with weeping, and the memory of that parting kiss was still hovering on her quivering lips, when, in a lonely lane not far from home, she found herself suddenly face to face with Shafto.

She had known him from his boyhood, ever since he came an orphan to Lennard Melfort's cottage; and although she always distrusted and never liked him, his face was a familiar one she might never see more; thus she resolved to part with



him as with the best of friends, and to remember that he was the only kinsman of Florian, whose companion and fellow-traveller he was to be on a journey the end of which she scarcely understood. So, frankly and sweetly, with a sad smile in her eyes, she proffered her pretty hand, which Shafto grasped and retained promptly enough.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SILVER LOCKET.

SHAFTO had just been with her father. How contemptuously he had eyed the corner and the high stool on which he had sat in the latter's legal establishment, and all its surroundings; the fly-blown county maps of Devon and Cornwall; advertisements of sales—property, mangold wurzel, oats and hay, Thorley's food for cattle, and so forth; the tin boxes of most legal aspect; dockets of papers in red tape; the well-thumbed ledgers; day and letter books, and all the paraphernalia of a country solicitor's office.

Ugh! How well he knew and loathed them all. Now it was all over and done with.

The three poor lads in the office, whose cheap cigars and beer he had often shared at the Ashburton Arms, he barely condescended to notice, while they regarded him with something akin to awe, as he gave Lawyer Carlyon his final 'instructions' concerning the disposal of the lease of the Major's pretty cottage, and of all the goods and chattels that were therein.

Had Florian been present he would have felt only shame and abasement at the tone and manner Shafto adopted on this occasion; but worthy Lawyer Carlyon, who did not believe a bit in the rumoured accession of Shafto to family rank and wealth, laughed softly to himself, and thought his 'pride would have a sore fall one of these fine days.'

And even now, when face to face with Dulcie, his general bearing, his coolness and insouciance, rendered her, amid all her grief, indignant and defiant ultimately.

How piquant, compact, and perfect the girl looked, from the smart scarlet feather in her little hat to her tiny Balmoral boots. Her veil was tightly tied across her face, showing only the tip of her nose, her ripe red lips, and pretty white chin—its point, like her cheeks, reddened somewhat by the winter breeze from the Channel. Her gloved hands were in her small muff, and the collar of her sealskin jacket was encircled by the necklet at which her silver locket hung—the locket Shafto had seen her kiss when Florian had bestowed it on her, while he looked close by, with his heart full of envy, jealousy, and hatred, and now it was the first thing that attracted his eye.

‘And you actually leave us to-night, Shafto?’ she said softly.

‘Yes, Dulcie, by the train for Worcester and the north. My estates, you know, are in Scotland.’

‘These changes are all strange and most startling,’ said she, with a sob in her slender throat.

‘We live in whirligig times, Dulcie; but I suppose it is the result of progress,’ he added sententiously. ‘I wonder how our grandfathers and grandmothers contrived to mope over and yawn out their dull and emotionless existence till they reached threescore and ten years.’

‘I shall never see that age, Shafto.’

‘Who knows? though life, however sweet now, won’t be worth living for then, I fancy.’

Dulcie sighed, and he regarded her in admiring silence, for he had a high appreciation of her bright and delicate beauty, and loved her—if we may degrade the phrase—in his own selfish and peculiar way, though now resolved—as he had often thought vainly—to ‘fly at higher game’; and so, full of ideas, hopes, and ambitions of his own, if he had ceased to think of Dulcie, he had, at least, ceased for a space to trouble her.

‘Florian will be writing to you, of course?’ said he, after a pause.

‘Alas! no, we have made no arrangement; and then, you know, papa—’

‘Wouldn’t approve, of course. My farewell advice to you, Dulcie, is—Don’t put off your time thinking of Florian—his ship will never come home.’

‘Nor yours either, perhaps,’ said Dulcie, angrily.

‘You think so—but you are wrong.’

‘Ah! I know these waited-for ships rarely do.’

‘I have read somewhere that ships of the kind rarely do come home in this prosaic and disappointing world; that some get wrecked almost within sight of land; others go down without the flapping of a sail, and sometimes after long and firm battling with adverse winds and tides; but *my ship* is a sure craft, Dulcie,’ he added, as he thought of the packet in his possession—that precious packet on which all his hopes rested and his daring ambition was founded.

Dulcie looked at him wistfully and distrustfully, and thought:

‘Why is he so sure? But his ideas were always selfish and evil. Tide what may,’ she added aloud, ‘I shall wait twenty years and more for Florian.’

‘The more fool you, then! And so die an old maid?’

‘I am, perhaps, cut out for an old maid.’

‘And if he never can marry you—or marries some one else when he can?’ asked Shafto viciously.

‘Oh, then I’ll take to æstheticism, or women’s rights, and all that sort of thing,’ said the poor girl, with a ghastly and defiant attempt at a jest, which ended in tears, while Shafto eyed her angrily.

‘How fond you are of that silver locket—you never wear any other!’

‘I have so few ornaments, Shafto.’

‘And none you prize so much?’

‘None!’ said Dulcie, with a sweet, sad smile.

‘Is that the reason you wear it with all kinds of dresses? What is in it—anything?’

‘That is my secret,’ replied Dulcie, putting her right hand



on it and instinctively drawing back a pace, for there was a menacing expression in the cold grey eyes of Shafto.

‘Allow me to open it,’ said he, taking her hand in his.

‘No.’

‘You shall!’

‘Never!’ exclaimed Dulcie, her eyes sparkling now as his grasp upon her hand tightened.

An imprecation escaped Shafto, and with his eyes aflame and his cheeks pale with jealousy and rage he tore her hand aside and wrenched by brutal force the locket from her, breaking the silver necklet as he did so.

‘Coward!’ exclaimed Dulcie; ‘coward and thief—how dare you? Surrender that locket instantly!’

‘Not if I know it,’ said he, mockingly, holding the prized trinket before her at arm’s-length.

‘But for Florian’s sake, I would at once apply to the police.’

‘A vulgar resort—no, my pretty Dulcie, you wouldn’t.’

‘Why?’

‘Not for Florian’s sake?’

‘Whose, then?’

‘Your own, for you wouldn’t like to have your old pump of a father down on you; and so you dare not make a row about it, my pretty little fury.’

‘Shafto, I entreat you, give me back that photo,’ said Dulcie, her tears welling forth.

‘No; I won’t!’

‘Of what interest or use can it be to you?’

‘More than you imagine,’ said Shafto, to whom a villainous idea had just then occurred.

‘I entreat you,’ said Dulcie, letting her muff drop and clasping her slim little hands.

‘Entreat away! I feel deucedly inclined to put my heel upon it—but I won’t.’

‘This robbery is cruel and infamous!’ exclaimed Dulcie, trembling with grief and just indignation; but Shafto only laughed in anger and bitterness—and a very hyena-like laugh it

was, and as some one was coming down the secluded lane, he turned away and left her in the twilight.

He felt himself safe from opprobrium and punishment, as he knew well she was loth to make any complaint to her father on the subject; and just then she knew not how to communicate with Florian, as the darkness was falling fast, and the hour of his departure close at hand. She thought it not improbable that Shafto would relent and return the locket to her; but the night was far advanced ere that hope was dissipated, and she attained some outward appearance of composure, though her father's sharp and affectionate eyes detected that she had been suffering.

He had heard from her some confused and rambling story about the family secret, the packet, and the peerage, a story of which he could make nothing, though Shafto's bearing to himself that evening seemed to confirm the idea that 'there was something in it.' Anyway, Mr. Carlyon was not indisposed to turn the event to account in one sense.

'Likely—likely enough, Dulcie lass,' said he; 'and so you'll hear no more of these two lads, if they are likely to become great folks, and belong to what is called the upper ten; they'll never think again of a poor village belle like you, though there is not a prettier face in all Devonshire than my Dulcie's, from Lyme Regis to Cawsand Bay.'

He meant this kindly, and spoke with a purpose; and his words and the warning they conveyed sank bitterly into the tender heart of poor Dulcie.

By this time the cousins were sweeping through the darkness in the express train by Exeter, Taunton, and so forth; both were very silent, and each was full of his own thoughts, and what these were the reader may very well imagine.

Heedless of the covert and sneering smiles of Shafto, Florian from time to time drew forth the photo of Dulcie, and her shining lock of red-golden hair, his sole links between the past and the present; and already he felt as if a score of years had lapsed since they sat side by side upon the fallen tree.

Then, that he might give his whole thoughts to Dulcie, he

affected to sleep ; but Shafto did not sleep for hours. He sat quietly enough with his face in shadow, his travelling-cap of tweed-check pulled well down over his watchful and shifty grey-green eyes, the lamp overhead giving a miserable glimmer suited to the concealment of expression and thought ; and as the swift train sped northward, the cousins addressed not a word to each other concerning those they had left behind, what was before them, or anything else.

After a time, Shafto really slept—slept the slumber which is supposed to be the reward of the just and conscientious, but which is much more often enjoyed by those who have no conscience at all.

Dulcie contrived to despatch a letter to Florian, detailing the outrage to which she had been subjected by Shafto ; but time passed on, and, for a reason we shall give in its place, the letter never reached him.

Again and again she recalled and rehearsed her farewell with Florian, and thought regretfully of his passionate pride, and desperate poverty too probably, if he quarrelled with Shafto ; and she still seemed to see his beautiful dark eyes, dim with unshed tears, while her own welled freely and bitterly.

When could they meet again, if ever, and where and how ? Her heart and brain ached with these questions.

Dulcie did not bemoan her fate, though her cheek paled a little, and she felt—even at her early years—as if life seemed over and done with, and in her passionate love for the absent, that existence alone was left to her, and so forth.

And as she was her father's housekeeper now, kept the keys and paid all the servants, paid all accounts and made the preserves, he was in no way sorry that the young men were gone ; that the ' aimless philandering,' as he deemed it, had come to an end ; and that much would be attended to in his cosy little household, which he suspected—but unjustly—had been neglected hitherto.

To Dulcie, the whole locality of her native place, the breezy moors, the solitary hills, the mysterious Druid pillars and logan stones, the rocky shore, and the pretty estuary of the Yealm,



where they had been wont to boat and fish for pilchards in summer and autumn, were all full of the haunting presence of the absent—the poor but proud and handsome lad who from boyhood, yea from infancy, had loved her, and who now seemed to have slipped out of her existence.

Spring melted into summer; golden sunshine flooded hill and dale, and lit up the waters of the Erm, the Yealm, and the far-stretching Channel, tinting with wondrous gleams and hues the waves that rolled upon the shore, or boiled about the Mewstone Rock, and the sea-beaten promontory of Revelstoke; but to Dulcie the glory was gone from land and water: she heard no more, by letter or otherwise, of the love of her youth; he seemed to have dropped utterly out of her sphere; and though mechanically she gathered the fragrant leaves of the bursting June roses—the Marshal Neil and Gloire de Dijon—and treasured them carefully in rare old china jars and vases, a task in which she had often been assisted by Florian, she felt and thought—‘Ichabod! Ichabod! the glory has departed!’

---

## CHAPTER IX.

### MR. KIPPILAW, W.S.

SHAFTO found himself a little nervous when he and Florian were actually in Edinburgh, a city in its beauty, boldness, and grandeur of rock and mountain, fortress, terrace, and temple, so foreign-looking to English eyes, and so utterly unlike everything they had ever seen or conceived before.

Florian's thoughts were peculiarly his own: His father's death—though called an uncle now, but Florian always felt for and thought of him as a parent—the loss of Dulcie, their abrupt departure from Devonshire, and rough uprootal of all early associations, had made a kind of hiatus in the young fellow's life, and it was only now when he found himself amid the strange streets and picturesque splendour of Edinburgh that he

began, like one recovering consciousness after a long illness, to gather up again the ravelled threads of thought, but with curious want of concern and energy; while Shafto felt that he personally had both, and that now he required to have all his wits about him.

Florian stood for a time that night at the door of their hotel in Princes Street looking at the wonderful lights of the Old Town sparkling in mid air, and some that were in the Castle must, he thought, be stars, they were so high above the earth. Scores of cabs and carriages went by, eastward and westward, but no carts or wains or lorries, such as one sees in London or Glasgow—vehicles with bright lamps and well-muffled occupants, gentlemen in evening suits, and ladies in ball or dinner dresses, and crowds of pedestrians, under the brilliant gaslights and long boulevard-like line of trees—the everchanging human panorama of a great city street before midnight.

How odd, how strange and lonely poor Florian felt; he seemed to belong to no one, and, like the Miller o' Dee, nobody cared for him; and ever and anon his eyes rested on the mighty castled rock that towers above streets, monuments, and gardens, with a wondrous history all its own, 'where treasured lie the monarchy's last gems,' and with them the only ancient crown in the British Isles. 'Brave kings and the fairest of crowned women have slept and been cradled in that eyrie,' says an enthusiastic English writer; 'heroes have fought upon its slopes; English armies have stormed it; dukes, earls, and barons have been immured in its strong dungeons; a sainted Queen prayed and yielded up her last breath there eight centuries ago. It is an imperishable relic—a monument that needs no carving to tell its tale, and it has the nation's worship; and the different Church sects cling round its base as if they would fight again for the guardianship of a venerable mother. . . . And if Scotland has no longer a king and Parliament all to herself, her imperial crown is at least safely kept up there amid strong iron stanchions, as a sacred memorial of her inextinguishable independence, and, if need were, for future use.'

Florian was a reader and a thinker, and he felt a keen inter-

est in all that now surrounded him; but Shafto lurked in a corner of the smoke-room, turning in his mind the task of the morrow, and unwisely seeking to fortify himself by imbibing more brandy and soda than Florian had ever seen him take before.

After a sound night's rest and a substantial Scottish breakfast had fitted Shafto, as he thought, for facing anything, a cab deposited him and Florian (who was now beginning to marvel why he had travelled so far in a matter that concerned him not in reality) at the residence of Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw, W.S., in Charlotte Square—a noble specimen of Adams Street architecture, having four stately symmetrical corresponding façades, overlooked by the dome of St. George's Church.

'Lawyers evidently thrive in Scotland,' said Shafto, as he looked at the mansion of Mr. Kippilaw, and mentally recalled the modest establishment of Lawyer Carlyon; 'but foxes will flourish as long as there are geese to be plucked.'

Mr. Kippilaw was at home—indeed, he was just finishing breakfast, before going to the Parliament House—as they were informed by the liveried valet, who led them through a pillared and marble-floored vestibule, and ushered them into what seemed a library, as the walls from floor to ceiling were lined with handsome books; but every professional man's private office has generally this aspect in Scotland.

In a few minutes Mr. Kippilaw appeared with a puzzled and perplexed expression in his face, as he alternately looked at his two visitors, and at Shafto's card in his hand.

Mr. Kippilaw was now in his sixtieth year; his long since grizzled hair had now become white, and had shrunk to two patches far apart, one over each ear, and brushed stiffly up. His eyebrows were also white, shaggy, and under them his keen eyes peered sharply through the rims of a gold pince-nez balanced on the bridge of his long aquiline nose.

Shafto felt just then a strange and unpleasant dryness about his tongue and lips.

'*Mr. Shafto Melfort?*' said Mr. Kippilaw inquiringly, and referring to the card again. 'I was not aware that there was a Mr. Shafto Melfort—any relation of Lord Fettercairn?'



'His grandson,' said Shafto unblushingly.

'This gentleman with the dark eyes?' asked Mr. Kippilaw, turning to the silent Florian.

'No—myself,' said Shafto sharply and firmly.

'You are most unlike the family, who have always been remarkable for regularity of features. Then you are the son—of—'

'The late Major Lennard Melfort, who died a few weeks ago——'

'Good heavens! where?'

'On the west coast of Devonshire, near Revelstoke, where he had long resided under the assumed name of MacIan.'

'That of his wife?'

'Precisely so—my mother.'

'And this young gentleman, whose face and features seem curiously familiar to me, though I never saw him before, he is your brother, of course.'

'No, my cousin, the son of my aunt, Mrs. Gyle. I am an only son, but the Major ever treated us as if he had been the father of both, so great and good was his kindness of heart.'

'Be seated, please,' said the lawyer in a breathless voice, as he seated himself in an ample leathern elbow chair at his writing-table, which was covered with documents and letters all arranged by his junior clerk in the most orderly manner.

'This is very sudden and most unexpected intelligence,' said he, carefully wiping his glasses, and subjecting Shafto's visage to a closer scrutiny again. 'Have you known all these years past the real name and position of your father, and that he left Kincardineshire more than twenty years ago after a very grave quarrel with his parents at Craigengowan?'

'No—I only learned who he was, and who we really were, when he was almost on his death-bed. He confided it to me alone, as his only son, and because I had been bred to the law; and on that melancholy occasion he entrusted me with this important packet addressed to *you*.'

With an expression of the deepest interest pervading his well-lined face, Mr. Kippilaw took the packet and carefully examined

the seal and the superscription, penned in a shaky handwriting, with both of which he was familiar enough, though he had seen neither for fully twenty years, and finally he examined the envelope, which looked old and yellow

‘If all be true and correct, these tidings will make some stir at Craigengowan,’ he muttered as if to himself, and cut round the seal with a penknife.

‘You will find ample proofs, sir, of all I have alleged,’ said Shafto, who now felt that the crisis was at hand.

Mr. Kippilaw, with growing interest and wonder, drew forth the documents and read and re-read them slowly and carefully, holding the papers, but not offensively, between him and the light to see if the dates and water-marks tallied.

‘The slow way this old devil goes on would exasperate an oyster!’ thought Shafto, whose apparently perfect coolness and self-possession rather surprised and repelled the lawyer.

There were the certificate of Lennard’s marriage with Flora MacIan, which Mr. Kippilaw could remember he had seen of old; the ‘certificate of entry of birth of their son, born at Revelstoke at 6 h. 50 m. on the 28th October P.M., 18—,’ signed by the Registrar, and the Major’s farewell letter to his old friend, entrusting his son and his son’s interests to his care.

‘But, hallo!’ exclaimed Mr. Kippilaw, after he had read for the second time, and saw that the letter of Lennard Melfort was undoubtedly authentic, ‘how comes it that the whole of your Christian name is *torn out* of the birth certificate, and the surname *Melfort* alone remains?’

‘Torn out!’ exclaimed Shafto, apparently startled in turn.

‘There is a rough little hole in the document where the name *should be*. Do you know the date of your birth?’ asked Mr. Kippilaw, partly covering the document with his hand, unconsciously as it were.

‘Yes—28th October.’

‘And the year?’

Shafto gave it from memory.

‘Quite correct—as given here,’ said Mr. Kippilaw; ‘but you look old for the date of this certificate.’

‘I always looked older than my years,’ replied Shafto.

Florian, who might have claimed the date as that of his own birth, was—luckily for Shafto—away at a window, gazing intently on a party of soldiers marching past, with a piper playing before them.

‘Another certificate can be got if necessary,’ said Mr. Kippilaw, as he glanced at the Registrar’s signature, a suggestion which made Shafto’s heart quake. ‘It must have come from the Major in this mutilated state,’ he added, re-examining with legal care and suspicion the address on the envelope and the seal, which, as we have said, he had cut round; ‘but it is strange that he has made no mention of it being so in his letter to me. Poor fellow! he was more of a soldier than a man of business, however. Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Melfort, on your new prospects. Rank and a very fine estate are before you.’

He warmly shook the hand of Shafto, who began to be more reassured; and saying, ‘I must carefully preserve the documents for the inspection of Lord Fettercarn,’ he locked them fast in a drawer of his writing-table, and spreading out his coat-tails before the fire, while warming his person in the fashion peculiar to the genuine ‘Britisher,’ he eyed Shafto benignantly, and made a few pleasant remarks on the Fettercarn family, the fertility and beauty of Craigengowan, the stables, kennels, the shootings, and so forth, and the many fine qualities of Lennard, as he called him—and about whom he asked innumerable questions, all of which Shafto could answer truly and with a clear conscience enough, as he was master of all that.

The latter was asked ‘what he thought of Edinburgh—if he had ever been there before,’ and so forth. Shafto remembered a little ‘Guide-book’ into which he had certainly dipped, so as to be ready for anything, and spoke so warmly of the picturesque beauties and historical associations of the Modern Athens that the worthy lawyer’s heart began to warm to so intelligent a young man, while of the silent Florian, staring out into the sunlit square and its beautiful garden and statues, he took little notice, beyond wondering *where* he had seen his eyes and features before!



## CHAPTER X.

## ALONE IN THE WORLD.

‘AND you were bred to the law, you say, Mr. Melfort?’ remarked the old Writer to the Signet after a pause.

‘Yes, in Lawyer Carlyon’s office.’

‘Very good—very good indeed : that is well ! We generally think in Scotland that a little knowledge of the law is useful, as it teaches the laird to haud his ain ; but I forgot that you are southland bred, and born too—the more is the pity—and can’t understand me.’

Shafto did not understand him, but thought that his time spent in Lawyer Carlyon’s office had not been thrown away now : experience there had ‘put him up to a trick or two.’

‘I shall write to Craigengowan by the first post,’ said Mr. Kippilaw, after another of those thoughtful pauses, during which he attentively eyed his visitor. ‘Lord and Lady Fettercairn—like myself now creeping up the vale of years’—(Hope they may soon see the end of it ! thought Shafto)—‘will, I have no doubt, be perfectly satisfied by the sequence and tenor of the documents you have brought me that you are their grandson—the son of the expatriated Lennard—and when I hear from them I shall let you know the result without delay. You are putting up at—what hotel ?’

‘At the Duke of Rothesay, in Princes Street.’

‘Ah ! very well.’

‘Thanks ; I shall be very impatient to hear.’

‘And your cousin—he will, of course, go with you to Craigengowan ?’

Shafto hesitated, and actually coloured, as Florian could detect.

‘What are your intentions or views ?’ Mr. Kippilaw asked the latter.

‘He failed to pass for the army,’ said Shafto bluntly and

glibly, 'so I don't know what he means to do *now*. I believe that he scarcely knows himself.'

'Have you no friends on your mother's side, Mr. Florian?'

'None !' said Florian, with a sad inflection of voice.

'Indeed ! and what do you mean to do?'

'Follow the drum, most probably,' replied Florian bitterly and a little defiantly, as Shafto's coldness, and his own great and good fortune, roused his pride and galled his heart, which sank as he thought of Dulcie Carlyon, sweet, golden-haired English Dulcie, so far away.

Mr. Kippilaw shook his bald head at the young man's answer.

'I have some little influence in many ways, and if I can assist your future views you may command me, Mr. Florian,' said he with fatherly kindness, for he had reared—yea and lost—more than one fine lad of his own.

It has been said that one must know mankind very well before having the courage to be solely and simply oneself ; thus, as Shafto's knowledge of mankind was somewhat limited, he felt his eye quail more than once under the steady gaze of Mr. Kippilaw.

'It is a very strange thing,' said the latter, 'that after the death of Mr. Cosmo in Glentilt, where Lord and Lady Fettercairn were so anxious to discover and recall his younger brother as the next and only heir to the title and estate, we totally failed to trace him. We applied to the War Office for the whereabouts of Major Lennard Melfort, but the authorities there, acting upon a certain principle, declined to afford any information. Advertisements, some plainly distinct, others somewhat enigmatical, were often inserted in the *Scotsman* and *Times*, but without the least avail.'

'As for the *Scotsman*,' said Shafto, the Major—'

'Your father, you mean?'

'Yes,' said he, reddening, 'was no more likely to see such a provincial print in Devonshire than the Roman *Diritto* or the Prussian *Kreuz Zeitung* ; and the *Times*, if he saw it—which I doubt—he must have ignored. Till the time of his death

drew near, his feelings were bitter, his hostility to his family great.'

'I can well understand that, poor fellow!' said Mr. Kippilaw, glancing at his watch, as he added, 'You must excuse me till to-morrow: I am already overdue at the Parliament House.'

He bowed his visitors out into the sun-lit square.

'You seemed to have lost your tongue, Florian, and to have a disappointed look,' said Shafto snappishly, as they walked slowly towards the hotel together.

'Disappointed I am in one sense, perhaps, but I have no reason to repine or complain save at our change of relative positions, but certainly not at your unexpected good fortune, Shafto. It is only right and just that your father's only son should inherit all that is legally and justly his.'

Even at these words Shafto never winced or wavered in his plans or purpose.

It was apparent, however, to Florian that he had for some time past looked restless and uneasy, that he started and grew pale at any unusual sound, while a shadow rested on his not usually very open countenance.

Betimes next morning a note came to him at the Duke of Rothesay Hotel from Mr Kippilaw, requesting a visit as early as possible, and on this errand he departed alone.

He found the old lawyer radiant, with a letter in his hand from Lord Fettercairn (in answer to his own) expressive of astonishment and joy at the sudden appearance of this hitherto unknown grandson, whom he was full of ardour and anxiety to see.

'You will lose no time in starting for Craigengowan,' said Mr. Kippilaw. 'You take the train at the Waverley Station and go *via* Burntisland, Arbroath, and Marykirk—or stay, I think we shall proceed together, taking your papers with us.'

'Thanks,' said Shafto, feeling somehow that the presence of Mr. Kippilaw at the coming interview would take some of the responsibility off his own shoulders.

'Craigengowan, your grandfather says, will put on its brightest smile to welcome you.'



'Very kind of Craigengowan,' said Shafto, who felt but ill at ease in his new *rôle* of adventurer, and unwisely adopted a free-and-easy audacity of manner.

'A cheque on the Bank of Scotland for present emergencies,' said Mr. Kippilaw, opening his cheque-book, 'and in two hours we shall meet at the station.'

'Thanks again. How kind you are, my dear sir.'

'I would do much for your father's son, Mr. Shafto,' said the lawyer, emphatically.

'And what about Florian?'

'The letter ignores him—a curious omission. In their joy, perhaps, Lord and Lady Fettercairn forgot. But, by the way, here is a letter for him that came by the London mail.'

'A letter for him!' said Shafto, faintly, while his heart grew sick with apprehension, he knew not of what.

'Mr. Florian's face is strangely familiar to me,' said Mr. Kippilaw aloud; but to himself, 'Dear me, dear me, where *can* I have seen features like his before? He reminds me curiously of Lennard Melfort.'

Shafto gave a nervous start.

The letter was a bulky one, and bore the Wembury and other post-marks, and to Shafto's infinite relief was addressed in the familiar handwriting of Dulcie Carlyon.

He chuckled, and a great thought worthy of himself occurred to him.

In the solitude of his own room at the hotel, he moistened and opened the gummed envelope, and drew forth four closely written sheets of paper full of the outpourings of the girl's passionate heart, of her wrath at the theft of her locket by Shafto, and mentioning that she had incidentally got the address of Mr. Kippilaw from her father, and desiring him to write to her, and she would watch for and intercept the postman by the sea-shore.

'Bosh,' muttered Shafto, as he tore up and cast into the fire Dulcie's letter, all save a postscript, written on a separate scrap of paper, and which ran thus:—

'You have all the love of my heart, Florian; but, as I feel

and fear we may never meet again, I send you this, which I have worn next my heart, to keep.'

*This* was a tiny tuft of forget-me-nots.

'Three stamps on all this raggabash!' exclaimed Shafto, whom the girl's terms of endearment to Florian filled with a tempest of jealous rage. He rolled the locket he had wrenched from Dulcie's neck in soft paper, and placed it with the post-script in the envelope, which he carefully closed and regummed, placed near the fire, and the moment it was perfectly dry gave it to Florian.

If the latter was surprised to see a letter to himself, addressed in Dulcie's large, clear, and pretty handwriting, to the care of 'Lawyer Kippilaw,' as she called him, he was also struck dumb when he found in the envelope the locket, the likeness, and the apparently curt farewell contained in one brief sentence!

For a time he stood like one petrified. Could it all be real? Alas! there was no doubting the postal marks and stamps upon this most fatal cover; and while he was examining it and passing his hand wildly more than once across his eyes and forehead, Shafto was smoking quietly at a window, and to all appearance intent on watching the towering rock and batteries of the Castle, bathed in morning sunshine—batteries whereon steel morions and Scottish spears had often gleamed of old.

Though his soul shrank from doing so, Florian could not resist taking Shafto into his confidence about this unexplainable event; and the latter acted astonishment to the life.

Was the locket thus returned through the post in obedience to her father's orders, after he had probably discovered the contents of it?

But Shafto demolished this hope by drawing his attention to the tenor of the pithy scrap of paper, which precluded the idea that it had been done under any other influence than her own change of mind.

'Poor Florian!' sneered Shafto, as he prepared to take his departure for Craigengowan; 'now you had better proceed at once to cultivate the wear-the-willow state of mind.'

Florian made no reply. His ideas of faith and truth and of true women were suddenly and cruelly shattered now!

‘She has killed all that was good in me, and the mischief of the future will be at her door!’ he exclaimed, in a low and husky voice.

‘Oh, Florian, don’t say that,’ said Shafto, who actually did feel a little for him; and just then, when they were on the eve of separation, even his false and artful heart did feel a pang, with the sting of fear, at the career of falsehood to which he had committed himself; but his ambition, innate greed, selfishness, and pride urged him on that career steadily and without an idea of flinching.

After Mr. Kippilaw’s remarks concerning how the face of Florian interested him, and actually that he bore a likeness to the dead Major—to his own father, in fact—Shafto became more than desirous to be rid of him in any way. He thought with dread of the discovery and fate of ‘the Claimant,’ and of the fierce light thrown by the law on that gigantic imposture; but genuine compunction he had none!

‘Well,’ he muttered, as he drove away from the hotel with his portmanteau, ‘I must keep up this game at all hazards now. I have stolen—not only Florian’s name—but his place, so let him paddle his own canoe!’

‘I’ll write you from Craigengowan,’ were his parting words—a promise which he never fulfilled. Shafto, who generally held their mutual purse now, might have offered to supply the well-nigh penniless lad with money, but he did not. He only longed to be rid of him—to hear of him no more. He had a dread of his presence, of his society, of his very existence, and now had but one hope, wish, and desire—that Florian Melfort should cross his path never again. And now that he had achieved a separation between him and Dulcie, he conceived that Florian would never again go near Revelstoke, of which he—Shafto—had for many reasons a nervous dread.

Full of Dulcie and her apparently cruel desertion of him, which he considered due to calm consideration of his change of fortune—or rather total want of it—Florian felt numbly in-



different to the matter Shafto had in hand and all about himself.

While very nearly moved to girlish tears at parting from one with whom he had lived since infancy—with whom he had shared the same sleeping-room, shared in the same sports and studies—with whom he had read the same books to some extent, and had ever viewed as a brother—Florian was rather surprised, even shocked, by the impatience of that kinsman, the only one he had in all the wide world, to part from him and be gone, and to see he was calm and hard as flint or steel.

‘Different natures have different ways of showing grief, I suppose,’ thought the simple Florian; ‘or can it be that he still has a grudge at me because of the false but winsome Dulcie? If affection for me is hidden in his heart, it is hidden most skilfully.’ No letter ever came from Craigenowan. The pride of Florian was justly roused, and he resolved that he would not take the initiative, and attempt to open a correspondence with one who seemed to ignore him, and whose manner at departing he seemed to see more clearly and vividly now.

The fact soon became grimly apparent. He could not remain idling in such a fashionable hotel as the Duke of Rothesay, so he settled his bill there, and took his portmanteau in his hand, and issued into the streets—into the world, in fact.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

### SHAFTO IN CLOVER

ABOUT six months had elapsed since Shafto and Florian parted, as we have described, at Edinburgh.

It was June now. The luxurious woods around Craigenowan were in all their leafy beauty, and under their shadows the dun deer panted in the heat as they made their lair among the feathery braken; the emerald green lawn was mowed and

rolled till it was smooth as a billiard-table and soft as three-pile velvet.

The air was laden with the wafted fragrance of roses and innumerable other flowers ; and the picturesque old house, with its multitude of conical turrets furnished with glittering vanes, its crow-stepped gables and massive chimneys, stood boldly up against the deep blue sky of summer ; and how sweetly peaceful looked the pretty village, seen in middle distance, through a foliated vista in the woodlands, with the white smoke ascending from its humble hearths, the only thing that seemed to be stirring there ; and how beautiful were the colours some of its thatched roofs presented—greenest moss, brown lichen, and stonecrop, now all a blaze of gold, while the murmur of a rivulet (a tributary of the Esk), that gurgled under its tiny arch, ‘the auld brig-stane’ of Lennard’s boyhood, would be heard at times, amid the pleasant voices of some merrymakers on the lawn, amid the glorious shrubberies, and belts of flowers below the stately terrace, that had long since replaced the moat that encircled the old fortified mansion, from whence its last Jacobite lord had ridden forth to fight and die for James VIII, on the field of Sheriffmuir—King of Scotland, England, France, and Ireland, as the unflinching Jacobites had it.

A gay and picturesquely dressed lawn-tennis party was busy tossing the balls from side to side among several courts ; but apart from all, and almost conspicuously so—a young fellow, in a handsome light tennis suit of coloured flannels, and a beautiful girl were carrying on a very palpable flirtation.

The gentleman was Shafto, and his companion was Finella Melfort, Cosmo’s orphan daughter (an heiress through her mother), who had returned a month before from a protracted visit in Tyburnia. They seemed to be on excellent terms with each other, and doubtless the natural gaiety of the girl’s disposition, her vivacity of manner, and their supposed mutual relationship, had opened the way to speedy familiarity.

She was a dark-haired and dark-eyed, but very white-skinned little beauty, with a perfect *mignonne* face, a *petite* but round

and compact figure, gracefully formed, and very coquettish and *spirituelle* in all her ways.

She had received her peculiar Christian name at the special request of her grandfather, that silly peer being desirous that her name might go down in the peerage in connection with that of the famous Finella of Fettercairn.

‘A winsome pair they would make,’ was the smiling remark of Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw, who was of the party (with three romping daughters from Edinburgh), to Lord Fettercairn, who smirked a grim assent, as if it was a matter of indifference to him, which it was not, as his legal adviser very well knew; and my Lady Drumshoddy, who heard the remark, bestowed upon him a bright and approving smile in return for a knowing glance through the glasses of his gold *pince-nez*.

In Craigengowan the adventurous Shafto Gyle had found his veritable Capua—he was literally ‘in clover.’ Yet he never heard himself addressed by his assumed name without experiencing a strange sinking and fluttering of the heart.

The once-despised Lennard Melfort’s sword, his commission, and his hard-won medals earned in Central India and the Terai of Nepaul were now looked upon as precious relics in his mother’s luxurious boudoir at Craigengowan, and reclaimed from the lumber-attic, his portrait, taken in early life, was again hung in a place of honour in the dining-hall.

‘What a fool my old uncle was to lose his claim on such a place as this, and all for the face of a girl!’ was the exclamation of Shafto to himself when first he came to Craigengowan, and then he looked fearfully around him lest the word *uncle* might have been overheard by some one; and he thought—‘If rascally the trick I have played my simple and love-stricken cousin—and rascally it was and is—surely it was worth while to be the heir of this place, Craigengowan. To reckon as mine in future all this grand panorama of heath-clad hills, of green and golden fields, of purple muirland, and stately woods of oak and pine where the deer rove in herds; as mine the trout-streams that flow towards the Bervie; the cascades that roar down the cliffs; the beautiful old house, with its



stables, kennels, and terrace; its cellars, pictures, plate, and jewellery, old china and vases of marble and jasper, china and Japanese work; and I possess all that rank and wealth can give!' and so thought this avaricious rascal, with a capacity for evil actions far beyond his years.

To the fair inheritance he had come to steal he could not, however, add as his the blue sky above it, or the waves of the German sea, which the North Esk flowed to join; but he was not without sense appreciative enough to enjoy the fragrance of the teeming earth, of the pine forests where the brown squirrels leaped from branch to branch, and on the mountain side the perfume of the golden whin and gorse.

Appraising everything, these ideas were ever recurring to his mind, and it was full of them now as he looked around him, and at times, like one in a dream, heard the pretty babble of the high-bred, coquettish girl, who, to amuse herself, made *aillades* at him; who called him so sweetly 'Cousin Shafto,' and who, with her splendid fortune, he was now beginning to include among the many goods and chattels which must one day accrue to him.

Lord and Lady Fettercairn were, of course, fully twenty years older than when we saw them last, full of wrath and indignation at Lennard for his so-called *mésalliance*. Both were cold in heart and self-absorbed in nature as ever. The latter was determined to be a beauty still, though now upon the confines of that decade 'when the cunning of cosmetics can no longer dissemble the retribution of Time the avenger.' The former was bald now, and the remains of his once sandy-coloured hair had become grizzled, and a multitude of puckers were about his cold, grey eyes, while there was a perceptible stoop in his whilom flat, square shoulders.

He was as full of family pride as ever, and the discovery of an unexpected and authentic heir and grandson to his title, that had never been won in the field or cabinet, but was simply the reward of bribery and corruption, and for which not one patriotic act had been performed by four generations, had given him intense satisfaction, and caused much blazing of bon-

fires and consumption of alcohol about the country-side ; and smiles that were bright and genuine frequently wreathed the usually pale and immobile face of Lady Fettercairn when they rested on Shafto.

We all know how the weak and easy adoption of a pretender by a titled mother in a famous and most protracted case not many years ago caused the most peculiar complications ; thus Lady Fettercairn was more pardonable, posted up as she was with documentary evidence, in accepting Shafto Gyle as her grandson.

We have described her as being singularly, perhaps aristocratically, cold. As a mother, she had never been given to kissing, caressing, or fondling her two sons (as she did a succession of odious pugs and lap-dogs), but, throwing their little hearts back upon themselves, left nurses and maids to 'do all that sort of tiresome thing.'

So Finella, though an heiress, came in for very little of it either, with all her sweetness, beauty, and pretty winning ways, even from Lord Fettercairn. In truth, the man who cared so little for his own country and her local and vital interests was little likely to care much for any flesh and blood that did not stand in his own boots.

Lady Fettercairn heard from her 'grandson' from time to time with—for her—deep apparent sympathy, and much genuine aristocratic regret and indignation, much of the obscure story of his boyhood and past life, at least so much as he chose to tell her ; and she bitterly resented that Lennard Melfort should have sought to put the 'nephew of that woman, Flora MacIan,' into the army, while placing 'his own son' Shafto into the office of a miserable village lawyer, and so forth—and so forth !

Fortunate it was, she thought, that all this happened in an obscure village in Devonshire, and far away from Craigengowan and all its aristocratic surroundings.

She also thought it strange that Shafto—('Whence came that name?' she would mutter angrily)—should be so unlike her dark and handsome Lennard. His eyebrows were fair and

heavy ; his eyes were a pale, watery grey ; his lips were thin, his neck thick, and his hair somewhat sandy in hue. Thus, she thought, he was not unlike what her husband, the present Lord Fettercairn, must have been at the same age.

As for the Peer himself, he was only too thankful that an heir had turned up for his ill-gotten coronet, and that now—so far as one life was concerned—Sir Bernard Burke would not rate it among the dormant and attainted titles—those of the best and bravest men that Scotland ever knew.

As for their mutual scheme concerning Shafto and their granddaughter Finella, with her beauty and many attractive parts, the former was craftily most desirous of furthering it, knowing well that, *happen what might* in the future, she was an heiress ; that marriage with her would give him a firm hold on the Fettercairn family, though the money of her mother was wisely settled on the young lady herself.

Indeed, Finella had not been many weeks home from London, at Craigengowan, before Lady Fettercairn opened the trenches, and spoke pretty plainly to him on the subject.

Waving her large fan slowly to and fro, and eyeing Shafto closely over the top of it, she said :

‘I hope, my dearest boy, that you will find your cousin Finella—the daughter of my dead darling Cosmo—a lovable kind of girl. But even were she not so—and all say she is—you must not feel a prejudice against her, because—because—’

‘What, grandmother?’

‘Because it is our warmest desire that you may marry her.’

‘Why, haven’t I money enough?’ asked Shafto, with one of his dissembling smiles.

‘Of course, as the heir of Fettercairn ; but one is always the better to have more, and you must not feel—’

‘What?’ asked Shafto, with affected impatience.

‘Please not to interrupt me thus. I mean that you must not be prejudiced against her as an expected *parti*.’

‘Why should I?’

‘One hears and reads so much of such things.’



'In novels, I suppose ; but as she is so pretty and eligible, why the dickens—'

'Shafto !'

'What now ?' he asked, with some irritability, as she often took him to task for his solecisms.

'Dickens is not a phrase to use. Exclamations that were suited to the atmosphere of Mr. Carlyon's office in Devonshire will not do in Craigengowan !'

'Well—she won't look at me with your eyes, grandmother.'

'How—her eyes—'

'They will never seem so bright and beautiful.'

'Oh, you flattering pet !' exclaimed my Lady Fettercairn, with a smile and pleased flush on her old wrinkled face, for her 'pet' had soon discovered that she was far from insensible to adulation.

Shafto certainly availed himself of the opportunities afforded by 'cousinship,' propinquity, and residence together in a country house, and sought to gain a place in the good graces or heart of Finella ; but with all his cunning and earnest wishes in the matter—apart from the wonderful beauty of the girl—he feared that he made no more progress with her than he had done with Dulcie Carlyon.

She talked, played, danced, and even romped with him ; they rambled and read together, and were as much companions as any two lovers would be ; but he felt nearly certain that though she flirted with him, because it was partly her habit to appear to do so with most men, whenever he attempted to become tender she openly laughed at him or changed the subject skilfully ; and also that if he essayed to touch or take her hand it was very deliberately withdrawn from his reach, and never did she make him more sensible of all this than when he contrived to draw her aside to the terrace on the afternoon of the lawn-tennis party.

She had long ere this been made perfectly aware that love and marriage were objects of all his attention, yet she amused herself with him by her coquettish *æillades* and waggish speeches.

'Finella,' said he, in a low and hesitating voice, as he stooped over her, 'I hope that with all your flouting, and pretty, flippant mode of treating me, you will see your way to carry out the fondest desire of my heart and that of our grandparents.'

'Such a fearfully elaborate speech! And the object to which I am to see my way is to marry you, Cousin Shafto?'

'Yes,' said he, bending nearer to her half-averted ear.

'Thanks very much, dear Shafto; but I couldn't think of such a thing.'

'Why? Am I so distasteful to you?'

'Not at all; but for cogent reasons of my own.'

'And these are?'

'Firstly, people should marry to please themselves, not others. Grandpapa and grandmamma did, and so shall I; and I am quite independent enough to do as I please and choose.'

'In short, you will not or cannot love me?'

'I have not said so, you tiresome Shafto!' said she, looking upward at him with one of her sweetest and most bewitching smiles.

'Then I have some hope, dear Finella?'

'I have not said that either.'

'You may yet love me, then?'

'No; not as you wish it.'

'But why?'

'You have no right to ask me.'

His fair, beetling eyebrows knit, and a gleam came into his cold grey eyes as he asked, after a pause:

'Is there anyone else you prefer?'

'You have no right to inquire,' replied she, and a keener observer might have detected that his question brought a tiny blush to her cheek and a fond smile to her curved lips; 'so please to let this matter drop, once and for ever, dear Shafto, and we can be such delightful friends—such jolly cousins.'

And so ended one of many such conversations on this topic—conversations that developed indifference, if not quite aversion, on the part of Finella, the clue to which Shafto was fated to find in a few weeks after.

## CHAPTER XII.

## VIVIAN HAMMERSLEY.

THE persistent attentions of Shafto were alternately a source of amusement and worry to Finella Melfort ; and when she found them become the latter, she had more than once retreated to the residence of her maternal grandmother, Lady Drumshoddy, though she infinitely preferred being at Craigen-gowan, where the general circle was more refined and of a much better style ; for Lady Drumshoddy—nathless her title—was not quite one of the ‘upper ten,’ being only the widow of an advocate, who, having done without scruple the usual amount of work to please his party and the Lord Advocate, had been rewarded therefor by an appointment (and knighthood) in Bengal, where he had gone at a lucky time, with the old advice and idea—

‘ They bade me from the Rupee Tree  
Pluck India’s endless riches,  
And then I swore that time should see  
Huge pockets in my breeches.’

Thus Sir Duncan Drumshoddy’s pockets were so well filled that when he came home to die, his daughter was heiress enough to be deemed a ‘great catch’ by the Fettercairn family, though her grandfather had been—no one knew precisely what.

And now Finella, by education, careful training, and by her own habit of thought, was naturally so refined that, with all her waggery and disposition to laughter and merriment, Shafto’s clumsy love-speeches occasionally irritated her.

‘ I have somewhere read,’ said he, ‘ that a man may get the love of the girl he wants, even if she cares little for him, if he only asks her at the right time ; but, so far as you are concerned, Finella, the right moment has not come for me, I suppose.’

‘ Nor ever will come, I fear, cousin Shafto,’ she replied, fanning herself, and eyeing him with mingled fun and defiance sparkling in her dark eyes.



Ere Shafto could resume on this occasion Lord Fettercairn came hurriedly to him, saying :

‘Oh, by-the-bye, young Hammersley, from London, will arrive here to-morrow for a few weeks’ grouse-shooting before he leaves for his regiment in Africa. You will do your best to be attentive to him, Shafto.’

‘Of course,’ said the latter, rather sulkily, however, all the more so that he was quick enough to detect that, at the mention of the visitor’s name, a flush like a wave of colour crossed the cheek of Finella.

Something in his tone attracted the attention of Lord Fettercairn, who said :

‘After the 12th I hope you will find a legitimate use for your gun—you know what I mean.’

Shafto coloured deeply with annoyance, as his grandfather referred to a mischievous act of his, which was deemed a kind of outrage in the neighbourhood.

In the ruins of Finella’s Castle at Fettercairn a pair of majestic ospreys had built their nest, guarded by the morass around them, and there they bred and reared a pair of beautiful eaglets. No one had been allowed to approach them, so that nothing should occur to break the confidence of safety which the pair of ospreys acquired in their lonely summer haunt, till soon after Shafto came to Craigengowan, and by four rounds from his breech-loader he contrived to shoot them all, to the indignation of the neighbourhood, and even of my Lord Fettercairn.

Not that the latter cared a straw about these eagles as objects of natural history, but the fact of their existence formed the subject of newspaper paragraphs, and his vanity was wounded on finding that one of his family had acted thus.

So on the morrow, at luncheon, the family circle at Craigen-gowan had two or three accessions to its number—friends invited for the 12th of August—among others, Mr. Kippilaw the younger, a spruce and dapper Edinburgh Writer to the Signet, ‘who,’ Shafto said, ‘thought no small beer of himself’; and Vivian Hammersley, a captain of the Warwickshire Regiment,

a very attractive and, to one who was present, most decided addition to their society.

His regular features were well tanned by the sun in Natal; his dark hair was shorn short; his moustaches were pointed well out; and his dark eyes had a bright and merry yet firm and steady expression, as those of a man born to command men, who had more than once faced danger, and was ready to face it again.

He was in his twenty-seventh year, and was every way a courteous and finished English gentleman; though Shafto, in his secret heart, and more than once in the stables, pronounced him to be a 'conceited beast.'

Hammersley had fished in Norway, shot big game in South Africa, hunted in the English shires, taking his fences—even double ones—like a bird; he had lost and won with a good grace at Ascot and the Clubs, flirted 'all round,' and, though far from rich, was a good specimen of a handsome, open-handed and open-hearted young officer, a favourite with all women, and particularly with his regiment. After luncheon he was seated beside Lady Fettercairn; he was too wise in his generation to have placed himself where he would have wished, beside Finella, whose little hand, on entering, Shafto thought he retained in his rather longer than etiquette required; for if Shafto's eyes were shifty, they were particularly sharp, and he soon found that though Finella, to a certain extent, had filled up her time by flirting in a cousinly way with himself, 'now that this fellow Hammersley had come,' he was 'nowhere,' as he thought, with a very bad word indeed.

We have said that Finella had paid a protracted and—to her—most enjoyable visit to Tyburnia. There at balls, garden parties, and in the Row she had met Vivian Hammersley repeatedly; and these meetings had not been without a deep and tender interest to them both; and when they were parted finally by her return to Craigengowan, though no declaration of regard had escaped him, he had been burning to speak to her in that sweet and untutored language by which the inmost secrets of the loving heart can be read; and now that they had met

again, they had a thousand London objects to talk about safely in common, which made them seem to be what they were, quite old friends, in fact; and ere long Lady Fettercairn began, like Shafto, to listen and look darkly and doubtfully on.

But when they were alone, which was seldom, or merely apart from others, there was between them a new consciousness now—a secret but sweet understanding, born of eye speaking to eye—all the sweeter for its secrecy and being all their own, a conscious emotion that rendered them at times almost afraid to speak or glance lest curious eyes or ears might discover what that secret was.

What was to be the sequel to all this? Hammersley was far from rich according to the standard of wealth formed by Lady Fettercairn, and the latter had destined her granddaughter, with all her accumulated wealth, to be the bride of Shafto. Hammersley knew nothing of this; he only knew his own short-coming in the matter of ‘pocket-ability’; but then youth, we are told, ‘is sanguine and full of faith and hope in an untried future. It looks out over the pathway of life towards the goal of its ambition, seeing only the end desired, and giving little or no heed to hills and dales, storms and accidents, that may be met with on the way.’ So, happy in the good fortune that threw him once more in the sweet society of bright Finella Melfort, Captain Hammersley gave full swing in secret to the most delightful of day-dreams.

In all this, however, we are somewhat anticipating our narrative.

But, like a wise man, while the luncheon lasted he was most attentive to his hostess, from whose old but still handsome face, like that of Tennyson’s Maud, ‘so faultily faultless, icily regular, and splendidly null,’ he ever and anon turned to that of Finella—that *mignonne* face, which was so full of varying expression, warmth, light, and colour.

‘Try that Madeira, Captain Hammersley,’ said Lord Fettercairn. ‘You will scarcely credit how long I have had it in the cellar. I bought a whole lot of it—when was it, Grapeston?’ he asked, turning to the solemn old butler behind him.



‘The year Mr. Lennard left home, my Lord.’

‘Everything at Craigengowan seems to take date before or after that event,’ said Lord Fettercairn, with knitted brow. ‘Do you mean for India, Grapeston?’

‘Yes, my lord,’ replied the butler, who had carried ‘Master Lennard’ in his arms as a baby.

‘Such a rich flavour it has, and just glance at the colour.’

Hammersley affected to do so, but his eyes were bent on the face of Finella.

‘I hope you won’t find Craigengowan dull, but every place is so after London.’

‘True, we live so fast there that we never seem to have time to do anything.’

And now, understanding that Shafto was to be his chief companion at the coveys on the morrow, Hammersley talked to him of hammerless guns, of central fire, of the mode of breaking in dogs, training setters, and so forth; and as these subjects had not been included in Shafto’s education at Lawyer Carlyon’s office, he almost yawned as he listened with irritation to what he could not comprehend.

‘If you care for fishing, Hammersley,’ said Lord Fettercairn, ‘the Bervie yields capital salmon, sea and yellow trout. Finella has filled more than one basket with the latter, but Shafto is somewhat of a duffer with his rod—he breaks many a rod, and has never landed a salmon yet.’

‘And the shooting?’ said Hammersley inquiringly.

‘Well, the best in the county are Drumtochy, Fasque, Hobseat, and my own, as I hope you will find to-morrow.’

‘Thanks—indeed, I am sure I shall.’

‘I have close on 5,000 acres, and the probable bag of grouse and black game is from 400 to 500 brace.’

After dinner that evening Finella was found singing at the piano—singing, as she always did, without requiring pressure, and apparently for the mere pleasure of it, as a thrush on a rose-bush sings; but now she sang for Vivian Hammersley. Shafto felt instinctively that she did so, and his bitterness was roused when he heard her, in a pause, whisper:

‘Please, Captain Hammersley, let Shafto turn the leaves. He likes to do it, though he can do little else in the way of music.’

This kind of confidence seemed to imply foregone conclusions and a mutual understanding, however slight ; but, to some extent, Finella had a kind of dread of Shafto.

Hammersley smiled and drew back, after placing a piece of music before her ; but not before remarking :

‘This song you are about to sing is not a new one.’

‘No—it is old as the days when George IV was king—it is one you gave me some weeks ago in London, you remember?’

‘Am I likely to forget?’

‘Turn the leaves, Shafto, please,’ said Finella, adjusting her dress over the music-stool ; ‘but don’t talk to me.’

‘Why?’

‘It interrupts one so ; but turn the leaves at the proper time.’

‘Captain Hammersley will do that better than I,’ said Shafto, drawing almost sulkily away, while the former resumed his place by Finella, with an unmistakable smile rippling over his face.

This song, which, it would seem, Hammersley had given her, was an old one, long since forgotten, named the ‘Trysting Place,’ and jealous anger gathered in Shafto’s heart as he listened and heard Hammersley’s voice blend with Finella’s in the last line of each verse :

‘We met not in the sylvan scene  
 Where lovers wish to meet,  
 Where skies are bright and woods are green,  
 And bursting blossoms sweet ;  
 But in the city’s busy din,  
 Where Mammon holds his reign,  
 Sweet intercourse we sought to win  
 ’Mid fashion, guile, and gain ;  
 Above us was a murky sky,  
 Around a crowded space,  
 Yet dear, my love, to thee and me,  
 Was this, our *trysting place*.

'They are who say Love only dwells  
'Mid sunshine, light, and flowers ;  
Alike to him are gloomy cells,  
Or gay and smiling bowers ;  
Love works not on insensate things  
His sweet and magic art ;  
No outward shrine arrests his wings,  
His home is in the heart ;  
And dearest hearts like *thine* and *mine*,  
With rapture must retrace—  
How often Love has deigned to shine  
On this, our *trysting place*.'

'Miss Melfort, you have sung it more sweetly than ever !'  
said Hammersley in a low voice as he bent over her.

'Confound him !' muttered Shafto to himself ; 'where was this trysting place ? I feel inclined to put a charge of shot into him to-morrow. I will, too, if the day is foggy !'

Finella, though pressed, declined to sing more, as the Misses Kippilaw, who were rather irrepressible young ladies, now proposed a carpet-dance, and she drew on her gloves ; and while she fumbled away, almost nervously, with the buttoning of one, she knew that Hammersley's eyes were lovingly and admiringly bent on her, till he came to the rescue, and did the buttoning required ; and to Shafto it seemed the progress was a very protracted one, and was a pretty little connivance, as in reality it was.

Miss Prim, Lady Fettercairn's companion, was summoned, and she—poor creature—had to furnish music for the occasion, till at last Finella good-naturedly relieved her.

So a carpet-dance closed the evening, and then Shafto, though an indifferent waltzer, thought he might excel in a square dance with Finella ; but he seldom shone in conversation at any time, and on this occasion his attempts at it proved a great failure, and when he compared this with the animation of Hammersley and Finella in the Lancers, he was greatly puzzled and annoyed. The former did not seem to undergo that agony so often felt by Shafto, of having outrun all the topics of conversation, or to have to rack his brain for anecdotes or jokes,



but to be able to keep up an easy flow of well-bred talk on persons, places, and things, which seemed to amuse Finella excessively, as she smiled brightly and laughed merrily while fanning herself, and looking more sparkling and piquante than ever.

‘What the deuce can he find to say to her?’ thought Shafto; but Hammersley was only finding the links—the threads of a dear old story begun in London months ago.

So passed the first day of Hammersley’s arrival at Craigen-gowan, and Finella laid her head on her pillow full of bright and happy thoughts, in which ‘Cousin Shafto’ bore no share.

But while these emotions and events were in progress, where, in the meantime, was Florian? Ay, Shafto Gyle, where?

---

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AMONG THE GROUSE.

NATHLESS the vengeful thoughts of the unamiable Shafto and his threats muttered in secret, the shooting next day passed off without any peril being encountered by the unconscious Hammersley—unconscious at least of the enmity his presence was inspiring. However, it was not so the second; and Finella and her fair friends agreed that if he looked so well and handsome in his heather-coloured knickerbocker shooting-dress, with ribbed stockings of Alloa yarn, his gun under his arm, and shot-belt over his shoulder, how gallant must he look when in full uniform.

In the field the vicinity of Shafto was avoided as much as possible, as he shot wildly indeed. By the gamekeepers, servants, and people generally on the estate he was simply detested for the severity of his manner, his tyranny, his disposition to bully, and meanness in every way; though at first, when he came to Craigen-gowan, they had laboured in vain, and vied with each other in their attempts to initiate him into

those field-sports so dear to Britons generally, and to the Scots in particular ; but when shooting grouse especially, the beaters or 'drivers' had genuine dread of him, and, when fog was on, sometimes refused to attend him, and he was, as they said among themselves, 'a new experience i' the Howe o' the Mearns.'

'I've seen as fu' a haggis toomed on a midden,' said the old head-gamekeeper wrathfully, as he drew his bonnet over his beetling brows ; 'but I'll keep my mind to mysel', and tell my tale to the wind that blows o'er Craigengowan.'

Though well past sixty now, Lord Fettercairn, hale and hearty, was in the field with his central-fire gun with fine Damascus barrels. Shafto, Hammersley, young Kippilaw, and four others made up the party.

The morning was a lovely one, and lovely too was the scenery, for August is a month richly tinted with the last touches of summer, blended with the russet tones of autumn ; the pleasant meadows are yet green, and over the ripened harvest the breeze murmurs like the ocean when nearly asleep.

Apart from the joyous exhilaration of shooting, and that outdoor exercise so dear to every English gentleman, Vivian Hammersley felt all that which comes from the romantic beauty of his surroundings—the scenery of the Howe of the Mearns, which is a low champaign and highly cultivated country, studded with handsome mansions, and ornamented by rich plantations and thriving villages.

Erelong the open moors were reached, and the hill-sides, the steep, purple ridges of which the sportsmen had to breast ; and, keen sportsman though he was, Hammersley had soon to admit that grouse-shooting was the most fatiguing work he had yet encountered ; but soon came the excitements of the first point, the first brood, and the first shot or two.

To the eye chiefly accustomed to brown partridges, grouse look dusky and even black, and they seem to hug the purple heather ; but when one becomes accustomed to them they are as easy to knock over as the tame birds ; and now the crack of the guns began to ring out along the hill-slopes.

Shafto and Hammersley were about twenty yards apart, and twice when a bird rose before the latter, it was brought down wounded but not killed by the former.

Hammersley felt that this was 'bad form,' as Shafto should not have fired, unless he had missed or passed it ; but he only bit his lip and smiled disdainfully. Lord Fettercairn remarked the discourtesy, and added :

'Shafto, I do wish you would take an example from Captain Hammersley.'

'In what way?' grumbled Shafto.

'He kills his game clean—few birds run from him with broken wings and so forth.'

'I am glad to hit when I can,' said Shafto, whose mode of life in Devonshire had made him rather soft, and he was beginning to think that nerves of iron and lungs like a bagpipe were requisite for breasting up the hill-slopes, and then shoot straight at anything.

Hammersley worked away silently, neither looking to his right nor left, feeling that though several elements are requisite for 'sport,' the chief then was to kill as much grouse as possible in a given time ; but he was more than once irritated and discomposed by Shafto, and even young Kippilaw, shooting in a blundering way along the line even when the birds were not flying high ; and he proceeded in a workmanlike way to bring down one bird as it approached, the next when it was past him, and so on.

The first portion of the day the Fettercairn party shot to points, and then to drivers, and in their fear of Shafto's wild shooting, the latter kept shouting while driving, and as he loathed the whole thing, and was now 'completely blown—pumped out,' as he phrased it, he was not sorry when the magic word 'lunch' was uttered ; and Hammersley certainly hailed it, for with the lunch came Finella, and with her arrival—to him—the most delightful part of the day.

She came tooling along the sunny pathway that traversed the bottom of a glen, driving with her tightly gauntleted and deft little hands a pair of beautiful white ponies, which drew



the daintiest of basket-phaetons, containing also Mr. Grapeston and an ample luncheon-basket; and the place chosen for halting was a green oasis amid the dark heather, where a spring of deliciously cool water was bubbling up, called Finella's Well.

'Now, gentlemen,' said Lord Fettercairn, 'please to draw your cartridges. I was once nearly shot in this very place by a stupid fellow who omitted to do so. So glad you have come, Finella darling, we are all hungry as hawks, and thirsty too.'

Lovely indeed did the piquante girl look in her coquettish hat and well-fitting jacket, while the drive, the occasion, and the touch of Hammersley's hand as he assisted her to alight gave her cheek an unwonted colour, and lent fresh lustre to her dark eyes; and the soldier thought that certainly there was nothing in the world so pleasant to a man's eye as a young, well-dressed, and beautiful girl.

'You have had good sport,' said she to the group, while her eye rested on Hammersley, and then on the rows of grouse laid by braces on the grass; and she 'brought a breeze with her,' as the gentlemen thought, and had a pleasant remark for each. Her mode of greeting the members of the party was different, as to some she gave her hand like a little queen, while to others she smiled or simply bowed; but provoked an angry snort from Shafto by expressing a hope that he 'had not shot anyone yet.'

And then he grew white as he recalled his angry thoughts of the preceding night.

'Why did you take the trouble to drive here?' he asked her, in a low voice.

'Because I chose to come; and I do so love driving these plump darlings of ponies,' replied the girl, patting the sleek animals with her tiny, slim hand.

'Old Grapeston would have done well enough; and why did you not bring one of the Kippilaw girls?'

'They are at lawn-tennis. If I thought I could please you—not an easy task—I should have tried to bring them all, though that is rather beyond the capacities of my phaeton.'

Shafto never for a moment doubted that she had come over to superintend the luncheon because 'that fellow Hammersley' was one of the party; and in this suspicion perhaps he was right.

As for Hammersley, being ignorant of Shafto's antecedents, his present hopes, and those of Lady Fettercairn, he could not comprehend how the grandson and heir-apparent of a peer came to be 'such bad form—bad style, and all that sort of thing,' as he thought; and all that became rather worse when Shafto was under the influence of sundry bumpers of iced Pommery Greno administered by Mr. Grapeston.

As the sportsmen lounged on the grass, and the luncheon proceeded under the superintendence of old Jasper Grapeston, Finella, the presiding goddess, looked unusually bright and happy—a consummation which Shafto never doubted, in his rage and jealousy, came of the presence of Vivian Hammersley, and that her brilliance was all the result of another man's society—not his, certainly, and hence he would have preferred that she was not light-hearted at all.

He could see that with all her *espèglerie* Finella found no occasion to laugh at Hammersley or tease or snub that gentleman as she did himself; but the attentions of Hammersley were delicately and seductively paid. Deferential and gentle at all times, to all women, he had always been so to Finella Melfort, and she was able to feel more than his words, looks, or manner suggested to others; and he imagined—nay, he was becoming certain—and a glow of great joy came with the certainty—that Finella's sweet dark eyes grew brighter at his approach; that a rose-leaf tinge crossed her delicate cheek, and there came a slight quiver into her voice when she replied to him:

'Was it all really so?'

Fate was soon to decide that which he had been too slow or timid to decide for himself.

As he said one of the merest commonplaces to her, their eyes met.

It was only one lingering glance!

But looks can say so much more than the voice, the eyes surpassing the lips, breaking or revealing what the silence of months, it may be years, has hidden, and leading heart to heart.

‘Grandpapa,’ said Finella, suddenly, and just before driving off, ‘do you shoot over this ground to-morrow?’

‘To a certain extent we shall—but why?’

‘Shall I bring the luncheon here?’

‘Yes, pet, to Finella’s Well.’

‘So, then, this shall be our trysting-place!’ said she, with a bow to all, and a merry glance which included most certainly Vivian Hammersley, to whom the landscape seemed to darken with her departure.

‘Now is the time for shooting to advantage,’ said Lord Fettercairn, who knew by old experience that when the afternoon shadows, and more especially those of evening, begin to lengthen, the slopes of the hills are seen better, that the birds, too, lie better, and that as the air becomes more fresh and cool men can shoot with greater care and deliberation than in the heat of noon. But Hammersley, full of his own thoughts, full of the image of Finella and that tale-telling glance they had exchanged, missed nearly every bird, to the great exultation of Shafto, who made an incredible number of bad and clumsy jokes thereon—jokes which the young Englishman heard with perfect indifference and equanimity.

Shafto, however, scarcely foresaw the result of the next day’s expedition, and certainly Hammersley did not do so either.

---

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE TWO FINELLAS.

NEXT day, when the grouse-shooting had been in progress for an hour or two, a mishap occurred to Hammersley. He twisted his ankle in a turnip-field, fell heavily on one side, and staggered up too lame to take further share in the sport for that day at least.



'When Finella comes with the lunch in the pony-phaeton she will drive you home,' said Lord Fettercairn, who then desired one of the beaters to give Hammersley the assistance of an arm to the well, where the repast was to be laid out as before.

When Shafto saw his rival limping he was delighted, and thought, 'This will mar his waltzing for a time at least ;' but he was less delighted when he heard of Lord Fettercairn's natural suggestion.

'It is likely a cunning dodge,' was his next thought, 'to get a quiet drive with her to Craigengowan.'

And Finella's look and exclamation of alarm and interest were not lost upon him when she arrived and found Hammersley seated on the grass by the side of the well, and saw the difficulty with which he rose to greet her, propping himself upon his unloaded gun as he did so ; and soft, indeed, was the blush of pleasure that crossed her delicate face when she heard of 'grandpapa's arrangement' ; and it certainly met, secretly, with the entire approbation of Hammersley, who anticipated with delight the drive home with such a companion.

After a time the luncheon—though skilfully protracted by Shafto—was over and Finella and her 'patient' were together in the phaeton, and she, with a smile and farewell bow, whipped up her petted ponies, Flirt and Fairy, whom every day she fed with apples and carrots.

Shafto thought jealously and sulkily that she was in great haste to be gone ; but more sulky would he have been had he seen or known that when once an angle of the glen was reached where the road dipped out of sight, the ponies were permitted to go at their own pace, which ere long dwindled into a walk, till they passed the vast ruined castle of Fettercairn. Finella and Hammersley were, however, if very happy, very silent, though both enjoyed the drive in the bright sunshine amid such beautiful scenery, and he quite forgot his petty misfortune in contemplating the delicate profile and long drooping eyelashes of the girl who sat beside him, and who, with a fluttering heart, was perhaps expecting the avowal that trembled on his

lips, especially when he placed his hand on hers, in pretence of guiding the ponies, which broke into a rapid trot as the lodge gates were passed; and glorious as the opportunity accorded him had been, Hammersley's heart, while burning with passionate ardour, seemed to have lost all courage, for he had a sincere dread of Lady Fettercairn, and suspected that her interests were naturally centred in Shafto.

At seven-and-twenty a man who has knocked about the world, with a regiment especially, for some nine years or so, does not fall over head and ears in love like a rash boy, or without calculating his chances of general success; and poor Hammersley, though he did not doubt achieving it with Finella herself, saw deadly rocks and breakers ahead with her family, and his spirit was a proud one. To make a declaration was to ruin or lose everything, for if the family were averse to his suit he must, he knew, quit their roof for ever, and Finella would be lost to him, for heiresses seldom elope now, save in novels; and he knew that in her circle the motives for marriage are more various and questionable than with other and untitled ranks of life. Rank and money were the chief incentives of such people as the Melforts of Fettercairn. 'Venal unions,' says an essayist, 'no doubt occur in the humbler classes, but love is more frequently the incentive, while with princes and patricians the conjugal alliance is, in nine instances out of ten, a mere matter of *expedience*.'

Craigengowan was reached, and not a word of the great secret that filled his heart had escaped him, for which he cursed his own folly and timidity when the drive ended, and a groom took the ponies' heads.

Yet the day was not over, nor was a fresh opportunity wanting. Lady Fettercairn and all her female guests had driven to a flower-show at the nearest town; even Mrs. Prim was gone, and the house was empty!

Everything in and about Craigengowan seemed conducive to love-talk and confidences. The great and picturesque house itself was charming. The old orchards would ere long be heavy with fruit, and were then a sight to see; on the

terrace the peacocks were strutting to and fro; there were fancy arbours admirably adapted for flirtation, and a quaint old Scottish garden (with a sun and moon dial) now gay with all the flowers of August.

On a lounge near an open window facing the latter Hammersley was reclining, when Finella, after changing her driving dress, came into the drawing-room, and finely her costume suited her dark and piquante style of beauty. She wore a cream-coloured silk, profusely trimmed with filmy lace, and a cluster of scarlet flowers on the left shoulder among the lace of the collar that encircled her slender neck; and Hammersley, as he looked at her, thought that 'beauty unadorned' was rather a fallacy.

His undisguised expression of admiration as he partly rose to receive her caused her to colour a little, as she inquired if his hurt was easier now; but, instead of replying, he said, while venturing slightly to touch her hand:

'Tell me, Miss Melfort, how you came by your pretty name of Finella? Not from Finella in "Peveril of the Peak"?'

'Ah, I am very unlike her!'

'You are certainly quite as charming!'

'But neither dumb nor pretending to be so,' said the girl, with one of her silvery little laughs.

'Finella!' said Hammersley, as if to himself, in a low and unconsciously loving tone! 'whence the name? Is it a family one?'

'Don't you know?' she asked.

'How could I know? I know only that I will never forget it.'

'Of course you could not know. The origin of my name is one of the oldest legends of the Howe of the Mearns.'

'Howe—that is Scotch for "hollow," I believe.'

'No; "hollow" is the English for *howe*,' replied Finella, laughing, as she recalled a quip of Boucicault's to the same purpose. 'You saw the great old castle we passed in our drive home?'

'Yes.'

'Well, I am called Finella from a lady who lived there.'



‘After it fell into ruin?’

‘No; before it.’

‘Then she must have lived a precious long time ago.’

‘She certainly did—some—nearly a thousand years ago.’

‘What a little quiz you are! Now, Miss Melfort, what joke is this?’

‘No joke at all,’ said she, quite seriously; ‘you can read about it in our family history—or I shall read it to you in the “Book of Fettercairn.”’

She took from a table near a handsome volume, which her grandfather—to please whom she was named Finella—had, in a spirit of family vanity, prepared for private circulation, and as if to connect his title with antiquity, prefaced by a story well known in ancient Scottish history, though little known to the Scots of the present day.

We give it from his lordship’s book verbatim as she read it to Vivian Hammersley, who—cunning rogue—was not indisposed, with such a charming and sympathetic companion as Finella, to make the most of his fall, and reclined rather luxuriously on the velvet lounge, while she, seated in a dainty little chair, read on; but he scarcely listened, so intent was he on watching her sweet face, her white and perfect ears, her downcast eyelids with their long lashes—her whole self!

The Melforts, Lords Fettercairn (Strathfinella) and of that ilk, take their hereditary title from the old castle of that name, which stands in the Howe of the Mearns, and is sometimes called the Castle of Finella. It is situated on an eminence, and is now surrounded on three sides by a morass. It is enclosed within an inner and an outer wall of oblong form, and occupying half an acre of ground. The inner is composed of vitrified matter, but no lime has been used in its construction. The walls are a congeries of small stones cemented together by some molten matter, now harder than the stones themselves; and the remarkable event for which this castle is celebrated in history is the following:

When Kenneth III, a wise and valiant king (who defeated the Danes at the battle of Luncarty, and created on that field

the Hays, Earls of Errol, Hereditary Constables of Scotland, and leaders of the feudal cavalry, thus originating also the noble families of Tweeddale and Kinnoull), was on the throne, his favourite residence was the castle of Kincardine, the ruins of which still remain about a mile eastward of the village of Fettercairn, and from thence he went periodically to pay his devotions at the shrine of St. Palladius, Apostle of the Scots, to whom the latter had been sent by Pope Celestine in the sixth century to oppose the Pelagian heresy, and whose bones at Fordoun were enclosed in a shrine of gold and precious stones in 1409 by the Bishop of St. Andrews.

The king had excited the deadly hatred of Finella, the Lady of Fettercairn, daughter of the Earl of Angus, by having justly put to death her son, who was a traitor and had rebelled against him in Lochaber; and, with the intention of being revenged, she prepared at Fettercairn a singular engine or 'infernal machine,' with which to slay the king.

This engine consisted of a brass statue, which shot out arrows when a golden apple was taken from its hand.

Kenneth was at Kincardine, engaged in hunting the deer, the wolf, the badger and the boar, when she treacherously invited him to her castle of Fettercairn, which was then, as Buchanan records, 'pleasant with shady groves and piles of curious buildings,' of which there remained no vestiges when he wrote in the days of James VI; and thither the king rode, clad in a rich scarlet mantle, white tunic, an eagle's wing in his helmet, and on its crest a glittering *clach-bhuai*, or stone of power, one of the three now in the Scottish regalia.

Dissembling her hate, she entertained the king very splendidly, and after dinner conducted him out to view the beauties of the place and the structure of her castle; and Kenneth, pleased with her beauty (which her raiment enhanced), for she wore a dress of blue silk, without sleeves, a mantle of fine linen fastened by a brooch of silver, and all her golden hair floating on her shouldiers, accompanied her into a tower, where, in an upper apartment, and amid rich festooned arras and 'curious sculptures' stood the infernal machine.

She courteously and smilingly requested the king to take the golden apple from the right hand of the statue ; and he, amazed by the strange conceit, did so ; on this a rushing sound was heard within it as a string or cord gave way, and from its mouth there came forth two barbed arrows which mortally wounded him, and he fell at her feet.

Finella fled to Den Finella, and Kenneth was found by his retinue '*bullerand in his blude.*'

Den Finella, says a writer, is said, in the genuine spirit of legendary lore, to have obtained its name from this princess, who, the more readily to evade her pursuers, stepped from the branches of one tree to those of another the whole way from her castle to this den, which is near the sea, in the parish of St. Cyres, as all the country then was a wild forest.

Buchanan deems all this story a fable, though asserted by John Major and Hector Boece, and thinks it more probable that the king was slain near Fettercairn in an ambush prepared by Finella.

So ended the legend.

As the girl read on, Vivian Hammersley had bent lower and lower over her, till the tip of his moustache nearly touched her rich dark hair, and his arm all but stole round her. Finella Melfort was quite conscious of this close proximity, and though she did not shrink from it, that consciousness made her colour deepen and her sweet voice become unsteady.

'That is the story of Finella of Fettercairn,' said she, closing the book.

'And to this awful legend of the dark ages, which only wants blue-fire, lime-light, and a musical accompaniment to set it off, you owe your name?' said he, laughingly.

'Yes—it was grandfather's whim.'

'It is odd that you—the belle of the last London season, should be named after such a grotesque old termagant !'

She looked up at him smilingly, and then, as their eyes met, the expression of that glance exchanged beside the well on the hills came into them again ; heart spoke to heart ; he bent his face nearer hers, and his arm went round her in earnest.



'Finella, my darling!' escaped him, and as he kissed her unresisting lips, her blushing face was hidden on his shoulder.

And *this* tableau was the result of the two days' shooting—a sudden result which neither Shafto nor Hammersley had quite foreseen.

Of how long they remained thus neither had any idea. Time seemed to stand still with them. Finella was only conscious of his hand caressing hers, which lay so willingly in his tender, yet firm clasp.

Hammersley, in the gush of his joy, felt oblivious of all the world. He could think of nothing but Finella, while the latter seemed scarcely capable of reflection at all beyond the existing thought that he loved her, and though the avowal was a silent and unuttered one, the new sense of all it admitted and involved seemed to overwhelm the girl; her brightest day-dreams had come, and she nestled, trembling and silent, by his side.

The unwelcome sound of voices and also of carriage-wheels on the terrace, roused them. He released her hand, stole one more clinging kiss, and forgetful of his fall and all about it, started with impatience to his feet.

Lady Fettercairn and her lady guests had returned from the flower-show, and to avoid them and all the world, for a little time yet, the lovers, with their hearts still beating too wildly to come down to commonplace, tacitly wandered hand in hand into the recesses of a conservatory, and lingered there amid the warm, flower-scented atmosphere and shaded aisles, in what seemed a delicious dream.

Finella was conscious that Vivian Hammersley was talking to her lovingly and caressingly, in a low and tender voice, as he had never talked before, and she felt that she was 'Finella'—the dearest and sweetest name in the world to him—and no more Miss Melfort.

\* \* \* \* \*

It would be difficult, and superfluous perhaps, to describe the emotions of these two during the next few days.

Though now quite aware that Finella and Hammersley had

met each other frequently before, Shafto's surprise at their intimacy, though apparently undemonstrative, grew speedily into suspicious anger. He felt intuitively that *his* presence made not the slightest difference to them, though he did not forget it; and he failed to understand how 'this fellow' had so quickly gained his subtle and familiar position with Finella.

It galled him to the quick to see and feel all this, and know that he could never please her as she seemed to be pleased with Hammersley; for her colour heightened, her eyes brightened, and her eyelashes drooped and flickered whenever he approached or addressed her.

Shafto thought of his hopes of gaining Finella and her fortune against any discovery that might be made of the falsehood of his position, and so wrath and hatred gathered in his heart together.

He was baffled at times by her bright smiles and pretty, irresistible manner, but nevertheless he 'put his brains in steep' to scheme again.

---

## CHAPTER XV.

### AT REVELSTOKE AGAIN.

MEANWHILE sore trouble had come upon Dulcie Carlyon in her Devonshire home.

Her father had been dull and gloomy of late, and had more than once laid his hand affectionately on her ruddy golden hair, and said in a prayerful way that 'he hoped he might soon see her well married, and that she might never be left friendless!'

'Why such thoughts, dear papa?' she would reply.

Dulcie had felt a sense of apprehension for some time past. Was it born of her father's forebodings, or of the presentiment about which she had conversed with Florian? A depression hung over her—an undefinable dread of some great calamity

about to happen. At night her sleep was restless and broken, and by day a vague fear haunted her.

The evil boded was to happen soon now.

With these oppressive thoughts mingled the memory of the tall and handsome dark-eyed lad she loved—it seemed so long ago, and she longed to hear his voice again, and for his breast to lay her head upon. But where was Florian now? Months had passed without her hearing of him, and she might never hear again!

Little could she have conceived the foul trick that Shafto had played them both in the matter of the locket; but, unfortunately for herself, she had not seen the last of that enterprising young gentleman.

She felt miserably that her heart was lonely and heavy, and that, young as she was, light and joy, with the absence and ruin of Florian, had gone out of her life. She was alone always with her great sorrow, and longed much for tears; but as her past life had been a happy and joyous one, Dulcie Carlyon had been little—if at all—given to them.

One morning her father did not appear at breakfast as usual. As yet undressed, her red-golden hair, that the old man loved to stroke and caress, was floating in a great loose mass on her back and shoulders, and her blue eyes looked bright and clear, if thoughtful.

She had, as was her daily wont, arranged his letters, cut and aired the morning papers for him, adjusted a vase of fresh flowers on the table, with a basket of delicate peaches, which, she knew he liked, from the famous south wall of the garden, with green fig-leaves round them, for Dulcie did everything prettily and tastefully, however trivial. Then she cut and buttered his bread, poured out his tea, and waited.

Still he did not appear. She knocked on his bedroom door but received no answer, and saw, with surprise, that his boots were still on the mat outside.

She peeped in and called on him—‘Papa, papa!’ but there was no response.

The room was empty, and the morning sun streamed through



the uncurtained window. The bed had not been slept in! Again she called his name, and rushed downstairs in alarm and affright.

The gas was burning in his writing-room; the window was still closed as it had been overnight; and there, in his easy chair, with his hands and arms stretched out on the table, sat Llewellyn Carlyon, with his head bent forward, asleep, as Dulcie thought, when she saw him.

'Poor papa,' she murmured; 'he has actually gone to sleep over his horrid, weary work.'

She leaned over his chair; wound her soft arms round his neck and bowed grey head—her lovely blue eyes radiant with filial love, till, as she laid her cheek upon it, a mortal chill struck her, and a low cry of awful dismay escaped her.

'What is this—papa?'

She failed to rouse him, for his sleep was the sleep of death!

It was disease of the heart, the doctors said, and he had thus passed away—died in harness; a pen was yet clutched in his right hand, and an unfinished legal document lay beneath it.

Dulcie fainted, and was borne away by the servants to her own room—they were old and affectionate country folks, who had been long with Llewellyn Carlyon, and loved him and his daughter well.

Poor Dulcie remained long unconscious, the sudden shock was so dreadful to her, and when she woke from it, the old curate, Mr. Pentreath, who had baptized Florian and herself, was standing near her bed.

'My poor bruised lamb,' said he, kindly and tenderly, as he passed his wrinkled hand over her rich and now dishevelled tresses.

'What has happened?' she asked wildly.

'You fainted, Dulcie.'

'Why—I never fainted before.'

'She don't seem to remember, sir,' whispered an old servant, who saw the vague and wild inquiring expression of her eyes.

'Drink this, child, and try to eat a morsel,' said the curate, putting a cup of coffee and a piece of toast before her.

'Something happened—something dreadful—what was it—oh, what was it?' asked Dulcie, putting her hands to her throbbing temples.

'Drink, dear,' said the curate again.

She drank off the coffee thirstily; but declined the bread.

'I beat up an egg in the coffee,' said he; 'I feared you might be unable to eat yet.'

Her blue eyes began to lose their wandering and troubled look, and to become less wild and wistful; then suddenly a shrill cry escaped her, and she said, with a calmness more terrible and painful than fainting or hysterics:

'Oh, I remember now—papa—poor papa—dead! Found dead! Oh, my God! help me to bear it, or take me too—take me too!'

'Do not speak thus, child,' said Mr. Pentreath gently.

'How long ago was it—yesterday—a month ago, or when? I seem—I feel as if I had grown quite old, yet you all look just the same—just the same; how is this?'

'My child,' said the curate, with dim eyes, 'your dire calamity happened but a short time ago—little more than an hour since.'

Her response was a deep and heavy sob, that seemed to come from her overcharged heart rather than her slender throat, and which was the result of the unnatural tension of her mind.

'Come to my house with me,' said the kind old curate; but Dulcie shook her head.

'I cannot leave papa, dead or alive. I wish to be with him, and alone.'

'I shall not leave you so; it is a mistake in grief to avoid contact with the world. The mind only gets sadder and deeper into its gloom of melancholy. If you could but sleep, child, a little.'

'Sleep—I feel as if I had been asleep for years; and it was this morning, you tell me—only this morning I had my arms round his neck—dead—my darling papa dead!'

She started to her feet as if to go where the body lay under

the now useless hands of the doctor, but would have fallen had she not clutched for support at Mr. Pentreath, who upheld and restrained her.

The awful thought of her future loneliness, now that she had not another relation in the world, haunted the unhappy Dulcie, and deprived her of the power of taking food or obtaining sleep.

In vain her old servants, who had known her from infancy, coaxed her to attempt both, but sleep would not come, and the food remained untasted before her.

'A little water,' she would say; 'give me a little water, for thirst parches me.'

All that passed subsequently seemed like one long and terrible dream to Dulcie. She was alone in the world, and when her father was laid in his last home at Revelstoke, within sound of the tumbling waves, in addition to being alone she found herself well-nigh penniless, for her father had nothing to leave her but the old furniture of the house they had inhabited.

That was sold, and she was to remain with the family of the curate till some situation could be procured for her.

She had long since ceased to expect any letter from or tidings of Florian. She began to think that perhaps, amid the splendour of his new relations, he had forgotten her. Well, it was the way of the world.

Never would she forget the day she quitted her old home. Her father's hat, his coat and cane, were in the hall; all that he had used and that belonged to him were still there, to bring his presence before her with fresh poignancy, and to impress upon her that she was fatherless, all but friendless, and an orphan.

The superstitious people about Revelstoke now remembered that in Lawyer Carlyon's garden, blossom and fruit had at the same time appeared on more than one of his apple-trees, a certain sign of coming death to one of his household. But who can tell in this ever-shifting world what a day may bring forth!

One evening—she never forgot it—she had been visiting her father's grave, and was slowly quitting the secluded burial-ground, when a man like a soldier approached her in haste.

'Florian!' she attempted to utter his name, but it died away on her bloodless lips.



CHAPTER XVI.

‘TIS BUT THE OLD, OLD STORY.’

A POET says :

‘Not by appointment do we meet delight  
And joy : they need not our expectancy.  
But round some corner in the streets of life,  
They on a sudden clasp us with a smile.’

Florian it was who stood before her, but though he gazed at her earnestly, wistfully, and with great pity in his tender eyes as he surveyed her pale face and deep mourning, he made no attempt to take the hands she yearningly extended towards him. She saw that he was in the uniform of a private soldier, over which he wore a light dust-coat as a sort of disguise, but there was no mistaking his glengarry—that head-dress which is odious and absurd for English and Irish regiments, and which in his instance bore a brass badge—the sphinx, for Egypt.

He looked thin, gaunt, and pale, and anon the expression of his eye grew doubtful and cloudy.

‘Florian!’ exclaimed Dulcie in a piercing voice, in which something of upbraiding blended with tones of surprise and grief; and yet the fact of his presence seemed so unreal that she lingered for a moment before she flung herself into his arms, and was clasped to his breast. ‘Oh, what is the meaning of this dress?’ she asked, lifting her face and surveying him again.

‘It means that I am a soldier—like him whose son I thought myself—a soldier of the Warwickshire Regiment,’ replied Florian, with some bitterness of tone.

‘Oh, my God, and has it come to this!’ said Dulcie, wringing her interlaced fingers. ‘Could not Shafto—your cousin—’

‘Shafto cast me off—seemed as if he could not get rid of me too soon.’

‘How cruel, when he might have done so much for you, to use you so!’

‘I had no other resort, Dulcie; I would not stoop to seek favours even from him, and our paths in life will never cross each other again; but a time may come—I know not when—in which I may seek forgiveness of enemies as well as friends—the bad and the good together—for a soldier’s life is one of peril.’

‘Of horror—to me!’ wailed Dulcie, weeping freely on his breast.

‘This tenderness is strange, Dulcie! Why did you cast me off in my utter adversity and return to me my locket?’

Dulcie looked up in astonishment.

‘What *do* you mean, Florian—have you lost your senses?’ she asked in sore perplexity. ‘Where have you come from last?’

‘Plymouth; in a paper there I saw a notice of your terrible loss, and resolved to see, even if I could not speak with you.’

‘And you came—’

‘To see you, my lost darling, once again. Oh, Dulcie, I thought I should die if I left England and sailed for Africa without doing so. I got a day’s leave and am here.’

‘But why have you done this?’

‘This—what?’

‘Soldiering!’

‘Penniless, hopeless, what else could I do?—besides, I thought you had cast me off when you sent me back this locket,’ he added, producing the gift referred to.

‘That locket was stolen from me on the night you left Revelstoke—literally wrenched from my neck, as I told you in my letter—the letter you never answered.’

‘I received no letter, Dulcie—but your locket was taken from you by whom?’

‘Shafto.’

‘The double villain! He must have intercepted that letter, and utilised the envelope with its postmarks and stamps to deceive me, and effect a breach between us.’

'Thank God you came, dearest Florian!'

'I thought you had renounced me, Dulcie, and now I almost wish you had.'

'Why?'

'It is little use to remember me now—I am so poor and hopeless.'

'After all,' said she, taking his face between her hands caressingly, 'what does poverty matter if we love each other still?'

'And you love me, Dulcie—love me yet!' exclaimed Florian passionately.

'And shall never, never cease to do so.'

'But I am so much beneath you now in position, Dulcie—and—and—' his voice broke.

'What, darling?'

'May never rise.'

'Would I be a true woman if I forsook you because you were unfortunate?'

'No; but you are more than a woman, Dulcie—you are a golden-haired angel!'

'My poor Florian, how gaunt and hollow your cheeks are! You have suffered—'

'Much since last we parted here in dear old Devonshire. But Shafto's villainy surpasses all I could have imagined!'

'And where is Shafto now?'

'With his grand relations, I suppose. I am glad that we have unravelled that which was to me a source of sorrow and dismay—the returned locket. So you cannot take back your heart, Dulcie, nor give me mine?' said Florian.

'Nor would I wish to do so,' she replied, sweetly and simply. 'Though poor, we are all the world to each other now.'

'Hard and matter-of-fact as our every-day existence is, there is—even in these railway times—much of strange and painful romance woven up with many a life; and so it seems to be with mine—with ours, Dulcie.'

'Oh, that I were rich, Florian, or that you were so!' exclaimed the girl, as a great pity filled her heart, when she



thought of her lover's blighted life, their own baffled hopes, and the humble and most perilous course that was before him in South Africa, where the clouds of war were gathering fast. 'I, too, am poor, Florian—very poor; dear papa died involved, leaving me penniless, and I must cast about to earn my own bread.'

'This is horrible—how shall I endure it?' said he fiercely, while regarding her with a loving but haggard expression in his dark eyes.

'What would you have done if you had not met me by chance here?'

'Loafed about till the last moment, and then done something desperate. I *would* have seen you, and after that—the Deluge! In two days we embark at Plymouth,' he added, casting a glance at the old church of Revelstoke and its burying-ground. 'There our parents lie, Dulcie—yours at least, and those that I, till lately, thought were mine. There is something very strange and mysterious in this change of relationship and position between Shafto and myself. I cannot understand it. Why was I misled all my life by one who loved me so well? How often have I stood with the Major by a gravestone yonder, inscribed with the name of Flora MacIan, and heard him repeat while looking at it—

"A thousand would call the spot dreary  
Where thou takest thy long repose;  
But a rude couch is sweet to the weary,  
And the frame that suffering knows.  
I never rejoiced more sincerely  
Than at thy funeral hour,  
Assured that the one I loved dearly  
Was beyond affliction's power!"

Why did he quote all this to me, and tell me never to forget that spot, or who was buried there, if she was only Shafto's aunt, and *not* my mother?'

Florian felt keenly for the position of Dulcie Carlyon, and the perils and mortifications that might beset her path now; but he was too young, too healthy and full of animal life and

spirits, to be altogether weighed down by the thought of his humble position and all that was before him ; and now that he had seen her again, restored to her bosom the locket, and that he knew she was true to him, and had never for a moment wavered in her girlish love, life seemed to become suddenly full of new impulses and hopes for him, and he thought prayerfully that all might yet be well for them both.

But when?

To Dulcie there seemed something noble in the hopeful spirit that, under her influence, animated her grave lover now. He seemed to become calm, cool, steadfast, and, hap what might, she felt he would ever be true to her.

He seemed brave, and tender, and true—'tender and true' as a Douglas of old, and Dulcie thought how pleasant and glorious it would be to have such a handsome young husband as he to take care of her always, and see that all she did was right and proper and wise.

A long embrace, and he was gone to catch the inexorable train. She was again alone, and for the first time she perceived that the sun had set, that the waves looked black as they rounded Ravelstoke promontory, and that all the landscape had grown dark, desolate, and dreary.

What a hopeless future seemed to stretch before these two creatures, so young and so loving !

Florian was gone—gone to serve as a private soldier on the burning coast of Africa. It seemed all too terrible, too dreadful to think of.

'Every morning and evening I shall pray for you, Florian,' wailed the girl in her heart ; 'pray that you may be happy, good, and rich, and—and that we shall yet meet in heaven if we never meet on earth.'

On the second morning after this separation, when Dulcie was pillowed in sleep, and the rising sun was shining brightly on the waves that rolled in Cawsand Bay and danced over the Mewstone, a great white 'trooper' came out of Plymouth Sound under sail and steam, with the blue-peter flying at its foremasthead, her starboard side crowded with red coats, all

waving their caps and taking a farewell look at Old England—the last look it proved to many—and, led by Bob Edgehill, a joyous, racketsy, young private of the Warwickshire, hundreds of voices joined chorusing :

‘ Merrily, my lads, so ho !  
They may talk of a life at sea,  
But a life on the land  
With sword in hand  
Is the life, my lads, for me !’

But there was one young soldier whose voice failed him in the chorus, and whose eyes rested on Stoke Point and the mouth of the Yealm till these and other familiar features of the coast melted into the widening Channel.

Dulcie was roused to exertion from the stupor of grief that had come upon her by tidings that a situation had been found for her as companion—one in which she would have to make herself useful, amiable, and agreeable—in the family of a lady of rank and wealth, to whom she would be sent by influential friends of Mr. Pentreath in London.

The poor girl thought tearfully how desolate was her lot now, cast to seek her bread among utter strangers ; and if she became ill, delicate, or unable to work, what would become of her ?

Her separation from Florian seemed now greater than ever ; but, as Heine has it :

‘Tis but the old, old story,  
Yet it ever abideth new :  
And to whomsoever it cometh  
The heart it breaks in two.’

To leave Revelstoke seemed another wrench.

Dulcie had been born and bred there, and all the villagers in Revelstoke loved and knew Lawyer Carlyon well, and were deeply interested in the future of his daughter ; thus on the day of her departure no one made any pretence of work or working. Heads were popping out and in of the windows of the village street all the morning, and a cluster—a veritable crowd



—of kindly folks accompanied Mr. Pentreath and the weeping girl to the railway station; for she wept freely at all this display of regard and sympathy, especially from the old, whom she might never see again.

When the train swept her away, and she lost sight of the last familiar feature of her native place, a strange and heavy sense of utter desolation came over poor Dulcie, and but for the presence of other passengers she would have stooped her head upon her hot hands and sobbed aloud, for she thought of her dead parents—when did she not think of them now?

‘Oh!’ exclaims a writer, ‘if those who have loved and gone before us can see afar off those they have left, surely the mother who had passed from earth might tremble now for her child, standing so terribly alone in the midst of a seething sea of danger and temptation?’

---

## CHAPTER XVII.

### AT CRAIGENGOWAN.

WITH the new understanding—the tacit engagement that existed between herself and Vivian Hammersley—Finella writhed with annoyance when privately and pointedly spoken to on the subject of her cousin Shafto’s attentions and hopes.

‘Grandmamma,’ said she to Lady Fettercairn, ‘I don’t see why I may not marry whom I please. I am not like a poor girl who has nothing in the world. Indeed, in that case I am pretty sure that neither you nor cousin Shafto would want me.’

‘She must settle soon,’ said Lady Fettercairn, when reporting this plain reply to Lady Drumshoddy. ‘I certainly shall not take her to London again, yet awhile.’

‘You are right,’ replied that somewhat grim matron; ‘and when once this Captain Hammersley, who, to my idea, is somewhat too *épris* with her, is gone, you can easily find some pretext for remaining at Craigengowan; or shall I have her with me?’

‘As you please,’ replied Lady Fettercairn, who knew that the Drumshoddy *ménage* did not always suit the taste of Finella ; ‘but I think she is better here—propinquity and all that sort of thing may be productive of good. I know that poor Shafto’s mind is quite made up, and, as I said before, she must settle soon. We can’t have twenty thousand a year slipping out of the family.’

Finella thought little of their wishes or those of Shafto. She thought only of that passionate hour in the lonely drawing-room, where she was alone with Vivian, and his lips were pressed to hers ; of the close throb of heart to heart, and that the great secret of her young girl’s life was his now and hers no longer, but, aware of the opposition and antagonism he would be sure to encounter just then, she urged upon him a caution and a secrecy of the engagement which his proud spirit somewhat resented.

He thought it scarcely honourable to take advantage of Lord Fettercairn’s hospitality, and gain the love of Finella without his permission ; but as both knew that would never be accorded—that to ask for it would cut short his visit ; and as he was so soon going on distant service, with Finella he agreed that their engagement should be kept a secret till his return.

And to blind the eyes of the watchful or suspicious, he actually found himself flirting with one of the Miss Kippilaws, three young ladies who thought they spoke the purest English, though it was with that accent which Basil Hall calls ‘the hideous patois of Edinburgh’ ; and, perceiving this, Lady Fettercairn became somewhat contented, and Finella was excessively amused.

Not so the astute Shafto.

‘It is all a d——d game !’ muttered that young gentleman ; ‘a red herring drawn across the scent.’

‘Why do you look so unhappy, dearest?’ asked Finella one evening, when she and her lover found themselves alone for a few minutes, during which she had been contemplating his dark face in silence.

‘My leave of absence is running out so fast—by Jove, faster than ever apparently now !’

'Is that the sole reason?' asked the girl softly and after a pause, her dark eyes darkening and seeming to become more intense.

'No,' he replied, with hesitation.

'Tell me, then—what is the other?'

'You know how I love you——'

'And I—you.'

'But in one sense my love is so liable to misconstruction—so hopeless of proof.'

'Hopeless, Vivian—after all I have admitted?' she asked reproachfully.

'I mean because I am almost penniless as compared to you.'

'What does that matter? Surely I have enough for two,' said she, laughing.

'And I fear the bitter opposition of your family.'

'So do I; but don't mind it,' said the independent little beauty.

'I have heard a rumour that one of the Melforts who made a pure love-marriage was cut off root and branch.'

'That was poor Uncle Lennard, before I was born. Well—they can't cut *me* off.'

'They will never consent, and when I am far away, as I soon shall be, if their evil influence——'

'Should prevail with me? Oh, Vivian!' exclaimed the girl, her dark eyes sparkling through their unshed tears. 'Think not of their influencing me, for a moment.'

'Thank you a thousand times for the assurance, my love. It was vile of me to think of such things. I have a sure conviction that your cousin Shafto dislikes me most certainly,' said Hammersley, after a pause.

'I don't doubt it,' said she.

'They mean you for him.'

'They—who?'

'Your grandparents.'

'I know they do—but don't tease me by speaking of a subject so distasteful,' exclaimed Finella, making a pretty *moue* expressive of disdain.



He pressed a kiss on her brow, another on her hair, and his lips quickly found their way to hers, after they had been pressed on her snow-white eyelids.

‘I love you with my whole heart, Finella,’ he exclaimed passionately.

‘And I you,’ said the artless girl again, in that style of iteration of which lovers never grow weary, with an adoring upward glance, which it was a pity the gathering gloom prevented him from seeing.

As they walked slowly towards the house, she quickly withdrew her hands, which were clasped clingingly to his arm, as Shafto approached them suddenly. He saw the abrupt act, and drew his own conclusions therefrom, and, somewhat to Finella’s annoyance, turned abruptly away.

‘So that is the amiable youth for whom they design you,’ said he in a whisper.

‘Did I not say you were not to speak of him? To tell you the truth, I am at times somewhat afraid of him.’

‘My darling—I must give you an amulet—a charm against his evil influence,’ said Hammersley, laughing, as he slipped a ring on her wedding-finger, adding, ‘I hope it fits.’

‘What is this—oh, Vivian! actually a wedding-ring—but I cannot wear, though I may keep it.’

‘Then wear this until you can, when I return, darling,’ said he, as he slipped a gemmed ring on the tiny finger, and stooping, kissed it.

‘My heart’s dearest!’ cooed the girl, happily. ‘Well, Vivian, none other than the hoop you have now given me shall be my wedding-ring!’

Had Lady Fettercairn overheard all this she would have had good reason to fear that Finella’s twenty thousand a year was slipping away from the Craigengowan family, all the more so that the scene of this tender interview was a spot below the mansion-house, said to be traditionally fatal to the Melforts of Fettercairn, the Howe of Craigengowan—for there a terrible adventure occurred to the first Lord, he who sold his Union vote, and of whom the men of the Mearns were wont to say he

had not only sold his country to her enemies, but that he had also sold his soul to the Evil One.

It chanced that in the gloaming of the 28th of April, 1708, the first anniversary of that day on which the Scottish Parliament dissolved to meet no more, he was walking in a place which he had bought with his Union bribe—the Howe of Craigengowan, then a secluded dell, overshadowed by great alders and whin bushes—when he saw at the opposite end the figure of a man approaching pace for pace with himself, and his outline was distinctly seen against the red flush of the western sky.

As they neared each other slowly, a strange emotion of superstitious awe stole into the hard heart of Lord Fettercairn. So strong was this that he paused for a minute, and rested on his cane. The stranger did precisely the same.

The peer—the ex-Commissioner on Forfeited Estates—‘pulled himself together,’ and put his left hand jauntily into the silver hilt of his sword—a motion imitated exactly, and to all appearance mockingly, by the other, whose gait, bearing, and costume—a square-skirted crimson coat, a long-flapped white vest, black breeches and stockings rolled over the knee, and a Ramillie wig—were all the same in cut and colour as his own!

Lord Fettercairn afterwards used to assert that he would never be able to describe the undefinable, the strange and awful sensation that crept over him when, as they neared each other, pace by pace, he saw in the other’s visage the features of himself reproduced, as if he had been looking into a mirror.

A cold horror ran through every vein. He knew and felt that his own features were pallid and convulsed with mortal terror and dismay, while he could see those of his dreadful counterpart were radiant with spite and triumphant malice.

Himself seemed to look upon himself—the same in face, figure, dress; every detail was the same, save that the other clutched a canvas bag, inscribed ‘£500’—the price of the Union vote (or, as some said, the price of his soul)—on seeing which my Lord Fettercairn shrieked in an agony of terror, and fell prone on his face—a fiendish yell and laugh from the other making all the lonely Howe re-echo as he did so.

How long he lay there he knew not precisely ; but when he opened his eyes the pale April moon was shining down the Howe, producing weird and eerie shadows, the alder and whin bushes looked black and gloomy, and the window lights were shining redly in the tall and sombre mass of Craigengowan, the gables, turrets, and vanes of which stood up against the starry sky.

He never quite recovered the shock, but died some years after ; and even now on dark nights, when howls hoot, ravens croak, toads crawl, and the clock at Craigengowan strikes twelve, something strange—no one can exactly say what—is to be seen in the Howe, even within sound of the railway engine.

But to resume our own story :

Though a day for parting—for a separation involving distance, time, and no small danger to one—was inexorably approaching, Finella was very happy just then, with a happiness she had never known before, and with a completeness that made life—even to her who had known London for a brilliant season—seem radiant. She had been joyous like a beautiful bird, and content, too, before the renewal and fuller development of her intimacy with Vivian Hammersley ; but she was infinitely more joyous and content now. ‘ ’Twas but the old, old story ’ of a girl’s love, and in all her sentiments and all her hopes for the future Vivian shared.

The beautiful dreams of a dual life had been partly—if not fully—realised through him, who seemed to her a perfect being, a perfect hero : though he was only a smart linesman, a handsome young fellow like a thousand others, yet he possessed every quality to render a girl happy.

Shafto felt that Hammersley had quite ‘ cut the ground from under his feet ’ with Finella, as he phrased it ; and hating him in consequence, and being a master in cunning and finesse, wonderfully so for his years, he resolved to get ‘ the interloper’s ’ visit to Craigengowan cut short at all hazards, and he was not long in putting his scheme in operation.

The lovers thus were not quite unconscious of being watched by eyes that were quickened by avarice, passion, and



jealousy ; yet, withal, they were very, very happy—in Elysium, in fact.

Finding that Hammersley had suddenly become averse to gambling, after a long day among the grouse, Shafto strove hard to lure him into play one evening in the smoke-room.

Hammersley declined, aware that Shafto was remarkably sharp at cards, having become somewhat efficient after years of almost nightly play in the bar-room of the Torrington Arms at Revelstoke.

Shafto's manner on this evening became almost insulting, and he taunted him with 'taking deuced good care of such money as he had.'

'Pon my soul, young fellow, do you know that you are rather—well—ah—rude?' said Hammersley, removing his cigar for a moment and staring at the speaker.

'Sorry, but it's my way,' replied Shafto.

'Perhaps you had better make that your way,' said Hammersley, his brown cheek reddening as he indicated the room-door with his cigar. Then suddenly remembering that he must preserve certain amenities, and as guest—especially one circumstanced as he was secretly—he pushed his cigar-case towards Shafto, saying, 'Try one of these—they are Rio Hondos, and are of the best kind.'

'Thanks, I prefer my own,' said Shafto, sulkily.

At last, piqued by the manner of the latter, and having been lured into drinking a little more brandy and soda than was good for him after dinner, the unsuspecting Englishman sat down to play, and though he did so carelessly, his success was wonderful, for, while not caring to win, he won greatly.

Higher and higher rose the stakes, till a very considerable sum had passed into his hands, and handsome though Shafto's quarterly allowance from his 'grandfather,' paid duly by Mr. Kippilaw, he could not help the lengthening of his visage, and the growing pallor of it, while his shifty eyes rolled about in his anxiety and anger ; and Lord Fettercairn and young Kippilaw, who were present, looked on—the former with some annoyance, and the latter with amused interest.

Quite suddenly, Kippilaw exclaimed :

‘Hey—what the deuce is this? Captain Hammersley, you have dropped a card.’

And he picked one up from that officer’s side, and laid it on the table.

‘The ace of spades ! By Heaven, you have *already* played that card !’ exclaimed Shafto, with fierce triumph.

‘It is not mine !’ said Hammersley, hotly.

‘Whose, then ?’

‘How the devil should I know ?’ asked Hammersley, eyeing him firmly.

‘Your luck has been marvellous, but not so much so when we know that you play with double aces,’ said Shafto, throwing down his cards and starting from the table, as the other did, now pallid with just rage,

‘Would you dare to insinuate ?’ began the officer, in a hoarse tone.

‘I insinuate nothing ; but the disgraceful fact speaks for itself ; and I think you have been quite long enough among us in Craigengowan,’ he added, coarsely.

Vivian Hammersley was pale as death, and speechless with rage. He thought first of Finella and then of his own injured honour ; and we know not what turn this episode might have taken had not Lord Fettercairn, who, we have said, had been quietly looking on from a corner, said gravely, sharply, and even with pain, as he started forward :

‘Shafto ! I saw you drop *that card*, where Mr. Kippilaw picked it up—drop it, whether purposely or not I do not say—but drop it you did.’

‘Impossible, sir !’

‘It is *not* impossible,’ said the peer, irately ; ‘and I am not blind or liable to make mistakes ; and you too manifestly did so ; whence this foul accusation of a guest in my own house—a gentleman to whom you owe a humble and most complete apology.’

Shafto was speechless with rage and baffled spite at the new and sudden turn his scheme had taken, and at being circumvented in his own villany.

‘My Lord Fettercairn, from my soul I thank you!’ said Hammersley, drawing himself up proudly, looking greatly relieved in mind, and, turning next to Shafto, evidently waiting for the suggested apology.

But in that he was disappointed, as the ‘heir’ of Fettercairn turned abruptly on his heel and left the room, leaving his lordship to make the *amende*, which he did in very graceful terms.

As it was impossible now for both to remain longer under the same roof after a fracas of this kind, Hammersley proposed at once to take his departure for the south by a morning train; but Lord Fettercairn, who, with all his selfish shortcomings, had been shocked by the episode, and by several other ugly matters connected with his newly found ‘grandson,’ would by no means permit of that movement; and in this spirit of hospitality even Lady Fettercairn joined, pressing him to remain and finish his visit, as first intended; while Shafto, in a gust of baffled rage and resentment, greatly to the relief of Finella and of the domestics, betook himself to Edinburgh, thus for a time leaving his rival more than ever in full possession of the field.

‘Whether she is influenced by Captain Hammersley I cannot say,’ were the parting words of Lady Fettercairn to this young hopeful: ‘but you seem by this last untoward affair to have lost even her friendship, and it will be a dreadful pity, Shafto, if all her money should be lost to you too.’

And Shafto fully agreed with his ‘dear grandmother’ that it would be a pity indeed.

As a gentleman and man with a keen sense of honour, Hammersley disliked exceedingly the secrecy of the engagement he had made with Finella, and felt himself actually colour more than once when Lord Fettercairn addressed him; but his compunctions about it grew less when he thought of the awful escape he had made from a perilous accusation, that might have ‘smashed’ him in the service, and of the trickery of which Shafto was capable—a trickery of which he had not yet seen the end.

---



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## AT THE BUFFALO RIVER.

THE evening of the 10th January was closing in, and the blood-red African sun, through a blended haze of gold and pale green, red and fiery, seemed to linger like a monstrous crimson globe at the horizon, tinging with the same hues the Buffalo River as its broad waters flowed past the Itelizi Hill towards Rorke's Drift.

There a picquet of the Centre or Second column of infantry (of the army then advancing into Zululand), under Colonel Richard Glyn of the 24th Regiment, was posted for the night. The main body of the picquet, under Lieutenant Vincent Sheldrake, a smart young officer, was bivouacked among some mealies at a little distance from the bank of the river, along the margin of which his advanced sentinels were posted at proper distances apart, and there each man stood motionless as a statue, in his red tunic and white tropical helmet, with his rifle at the 'order,' and his eyes steadily fixed on that quarter in which the Zulu army was supposed to be hovering.

To reach the Buffalo River the various columns of Lord Chelmsford's army could not march by regular roads, as no such thing exists in Zululand, and the sole guides of our officers in selecting the line of advance through these savage regions were the grass-covered ruts left by the waggon-wheels of some occasional trader or sportsman in past times.

As the column had been halted for the night, at a considerable distance in rear of the outlying picquet, the men of the latter had their provisions with them ready cooked, and were now having their supper in a grassy donga or hollow. The earthen floor was their table, and Lieutenant Sheldrake, being more luxurious than the rest, had spread thereon as a cloth an old sheet of the *Times*; but the appetites of all were good, and their temperament cheery and hearty. Their rifles were piled,

and they brewed their coffee over a blazing fire, the flame of which glowed on their sun-burned and beardless young faces, and a few Kaffirs squatted round their own fire, jabbered, gesticulated, and swallowed great mouthfuls of their favourite liquor, 'scoff.'

Sheldrake was too ill or weary to attend closely to his own duties, and the moment the evening meal was over, he desired the sergeant of the picquet to 'go round the advanced sentries.'

The sergeant, a young and slender man, and who was no other than Florian, touched the barrel of his rifle and departed on his mission—to visit the sentinels in rotation by the river-bank, and see that they were in communication with those of the picquets on the right and left.

The scenery around was savage and desolate; long feathery grass covered the veldt for miles upon miles. The chief features in it were some blue gum trees, and on a koppie or little eminence, the deserted ruins of a Boer farm under the shadow of a clump of eucalyptus trees; and in the foreground were some bustards and blue Kaffir cranes by the river-bank.

Short service and disease had given Florian rapid promotion; for our soldiers, if brave, had no longer the power of manly endurance of their predecessors under the old system. According to General Crealock, the extreme youth of our soldiers in South Africa rendered their powers for toil very small; while the Naval Brigade, composed of older men, had scarcely ever a man in hospital. The Zulu campaign was a very trying one; there were the nightly entrenchments, the picquet duty amid high grass, and the absence of all confidence that discipline and that long mutual knowledge of each other give in the ranks. He added most emphatically that our younger soldiers were unfit for European campaigning; that half the First Division were 'sick'; there were always some 200 weak lads in hospital, 'crawling about like sick flies,' and, like him, every officer was dead against the short-service system.

The face of our young sergeant was handsome as ever; but it was strangely altered since late events had come to pass. There was a haggard and worn look in the features, particularly

in the eyes. The latter looked feverish and dim—their brightness less at times, while a shadow seemed below them.

Florian having, as he now deemed, no right to the name of Melfort, or even that of MacIan, had enlisted under the latter name, as that by which he had been known from infancy, lest he might make a false attestation. The name of Gyle he shrank from, even if it was his—which at times he doubted.

His regiment was the brave old 24th, or Second Warwickshire, which had been raised in the eventful year 1689 by Sir Edward Dering, Bart., of Surrenden-Dering, head of one of the few undoubted Saxon families in England, and it was afterwards commanded in 1695 by Louis, Marquis de Puizar.

Second to none in the annals of war during the reigns of Anne and the early Georges, the 24th in later times served with valour at the first capture of the Cape of Good Hope, in the old Egyptian Campaign, in the wars of Spain and India, and now they were once again to cover themselves with a somewhat clouded and desperate glory in conflict with the gallant Zulus.

Florian in his new career found himself occasionally among a somewhat mixed and rough lot—the raw, weedy soldiers of the new disastrous system—but there were many who were of a better type; and the thought of Dulcie Carlyon—the only friend he had in the world, the only human creature who loved him—kept him free from the temptations and evil habits of the former; and he strove to live a steady, pure, and brave life, that he might yet be worthy of her, and give her no cause to blush for him.

He got through his drilling as quickly as he could, and soon discovered that the sooner a soldier takes his place in the ranks the better for himself. He found that though many of his comrades were noisy, talkative, and quarrelsome, that the English soldier quicker than any other discovers and appreciates a gentleman. His officers soon learned to appreciate him too, and hence the rapidity with which he won his three chevrons; and Mr. Sheldrake felt that, young though he was, he could trust Florian to go round the sentinels.

Each was at his post, and the attention of each increased as



the gloom after sunset deepened, for none knew who or what might be approaching stealthily and unseen among the long wavy grass and mossy dongas that yawned amid the country in front.

‘Hush, Bob!’ said he to his comrade, Edgehill, whom he heard singing merrily to himself, ‘you should be mute as a fish on outpost duty, and keep your ears open as well as your eyes. What have you got in your head, Bob, that makes you so silly? But, as the author of the “Red Rag” says, we soldiers have not much in our heads at any time, or we wouldn’t go trying to stop cannon-balls or bullets with them.’

‘Right you are, Sergeant,’ replied Bob; ‘but I can’t think what made you—a gentleman—enlist.’

‘Because I was bound to be a soldier, I suppose. And you?’

‘Through one I wish I never had seen?’

‘Who was that?—

“The handsome young girl,

With her fringe in curl,

That worked a sewing machine,”

—sung the irrepressible Bob; and Florian returned to report ‘all right’ to Mr Sheldrake.

Though the actual cause of the Zulu war lies a little apart from our story, it may be necessary to mention that we invaded the country of Cetewayo after giving him a certain time, up to the 11th of January, to accept our ultimatum; to adopt an alternative for war, by delivering up certain of his subjects who had violated British territory, attacked a police-station, and committed many outrages,—among others, carrying off two women, one of whom they put to a barbarous death near the Buffalo River.

But instead of making any apology, or giving any indemnity, Cetewayo prepared to defend himself at the head of an enormous army of hardy Zulu warriors, all trained in a fashion of their own, divided into strong regiments, furnished with powerful shields of ox-hide, and armed with rifles, war clubs, and assegais—a name with which we are now so familiar. The

shaft of this weapon averages five feet in length, with the diameter of an ordinary walking-stick, cut from the assegai tree, which is not unlike mahogany in its fibre, and furnished with a spear-head. Some are barbed, some double-barbed, and the tang of the blade is fitted—when red-hot—into the wood, not the latter into the blade, which is then secured by a thong of wet hide, and is so sharp that the Zulu can shave his head with it; and it is a weapon which they can launch with deadly and unerring skill.

The Zulu king, says Captain Lucas, was unable to sign his own name, 'and was as ignorant and as savage as our Norman kings,' and he thought no more of putting women, 'especially young girls, to death, than Bluff King Hal' himself; yet a little time after all this was to see him presented at Osborne, and to become the petted and fêted exile of Melbury Road, Kensington.

This night by the Buffalo River was Florian's first experience of outpost duty, and he felt—though not the responsible party—anxious, wakeful, and weary after a long and toilsome day's march.

He knew enough of military matters to be well aware that the importance of outposts, especially when dealing with a wily and savage enemy, could scarcely be exaggerated, for no force, when encamping in the field, can be deemed for a moment safe without them. Thus it was a maxim of Frederick the Great that it was pardonable to be defeated, but never to be surprised.

'I don't understand all this change that has come over my life,' thought he, as he stretched himself on the bare earth near the picquet fire; 'but I wonder if my father and mother can see and think of me where they are. Yet I sometimes feel,' he added, with a kind of boyish gush in his heart, 'as if they were near me and watching over me, so they must see and think too.'

Where was Dulcie, then, and what was she doing? How supporting herself, as she said she would have to do? Had she found friends, or, months ago, been trodden, with all her tender beauty, down in the mire of misfortune and adversity?

These were maddening thoughts for one so far away and so utterly powerless to help her as Florian felt himself, and rendered him at times more reckless of his own existence because it was useless to her.

The air around was heavy with the dewy fragrance of strange and tropical plants, and vast, spiky, and fan-shaped leaves cast their shadows over him as he strove to snatch the proverbial 'forty winks' before again going 'the rounds,' or posting the hourly reliefs, for they are always hourly when before an enemy.

And when our weary young soldier did sleep, he dreamt, not of the quick-coming strife, not even of blue-eyed Dulcie, with her wealth of red golden hair, but, as the tender smile on his lips might have showed, of the time when his mother watched him in his little cot, with idolizing gaze, and when he, the now bronzed and moustached soldier, was a little child, with rings of soft dusky hair curling over his white forehead; when his cheeks had a rosy flush, and his tiny mouth a smile, and she fondly kissed the little hands that lay outside the snow-white coverlet her own deft fingers had made—the two wee hands that held his mother's heart between them—the heart that had long since mouldered by Revelstoke Church.

And so he slept and dreamed till roused by the inevitable cry of 'Sentry, go!' and, that duty over, as he composed himself to sleep again, with his knapsack under his head for a pillow, he thought as a soldier—

'To-day is ours. To-morrow never yet  
On any human being rose or set!'

---

## CHAPTER XIX.

### ELANDSBERGEN.

NEXT morning when the picquet was relieved young Sheldrake, who paid Hammersley's company in absence of the latter, who was soon expected with a strong draft from England, said to Florian :



'Look here, MacIan, I've made a stupid mistake. The company's money I have left among my heavier baggage in the fort beyond Elandsbergen, and I have got the Colonel's permission to send you back for it. This is just like me—I've a head, and so has a pin! The Quartermaster will lend you his horse, and you can have my spare revolver and ammunition. Have a cigar before you go,' he added, proffering his case, 'and look sharp after yourself and the money. There is a deuced unchancy lot in the quarter you are going back to. We don't advance from this till to-morrow, so you have plenty of time to be with us ere we cross the river, if you start at once.'

'Very good, sir,' replied Florian, as he saluted and went away to obtain the horse, the revolver, and to prepare for a duty which he intensely disliked, and almost doubted his power to carry out, as it took him rearward through a country of which he was ignorant, which was almost without roads, and where he would be single-handed, if not among savages, among those who were quite as bad; for in some of these districts, as in the Orange Free State and Boerland, there swarmed broken ruffians of every kind, many of them deserters; and, says an officer, 'so great, in fact, was the number of these undesirable specimens of our countrymen assembled in Harrysmith alone that night was truly made hideous with their howlings, respectable persons were afraid to leave their houses after nightfall, and the report of revolvers ceased to elicit surprise or curiosity. I have been in some of the most notorious camps and towns in the territories and mining districts of the United States, but can safely assert that I never felt more thankful than when I found my horse sufficiently rested here to continue my journey.' There were lions, too, in the wild plains, for some of our cavalry horses were devoured by them; the tiger-cat and the aarde-wolf also.

With a knowledge of all this Florian loaded his revolver, looked carefully to the bridle and stirrup leathers of his horse, received a note from Mr. Sheldrake to the officer commanding the little fort near the foot of the Drakensberg, and left the

camp of No. 2 column on his solitary journey, steering his way by the natural features of the country so far as he could recall them after the advance of the 10th January, and watching carefully for the wheel-tracks or other indications of a roadway leading in a westerly direction; and many of his comrades, including Bob Edgehill, watched him with interest and kindly anxiety till his white helmet disappeared as he descended into a long grassy donga, about a mile from Rorke's Drift.

The evening passed and the following day dawned—the important 12th—when Zululand was to be invaded at three points by the three columns of Lord Chelmsford; the advanced party detailed from Colonel Glyn's brigade to reconnoitre the ground in front got under arms and began to move off, and Sheldrake and others began to feel somewhat uneasy, for there was still no appearance of the absent one.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

The country through which Florian rode was lonely, and farmhouses were few and many miles apart. Its natural features were undulating downs covered with tall waving grass, furrowed by deep, reedy water-courses; here and there were abrupt rocky eminences, and dense brushwood grew in the rugged kloofs and ravines.

The air was delightful, and in spite of his thoughts the blood coursed freely through his veins; his spirits rose, and, exhilarated by the pace at which his horse went, he could not help giving a loud 'Whoop!' now and then when a gnu, with its curved horns and white mane, or a hartebeest appeared on the upland slopes, or a baboon grinned at him from amid the bushes of a kloof.

Before him stretched miles of open and grassy veldt, and the flat-topped hills of the Drakensberg range closed the horizon. The vast stretch of plain, across which ever and anon swept herds of beautiful little antelopes, was covered with luxuriant grass, which seemed smooth as a billiard-table, and over it went the track, which he was always afraid of losing. But, if pleasant to look upon, the veldt was treacherous ground, for hidden by the grass were everywhere deep holes burrowed by the ant-bears,

and into these his horse's forelegs sank ever and anon, to the peril of the animal and his rider too. Thus Florian was compelled to proceed at a canter with his reins loose, while he sat tight and prepared for swerving when his nag, which was a native horse, prepared to dodge an apparent hole, which they can do with wonderful sagacity.

So Florian was not sorry when he left the veldt behind him, and after a ride of about thirty miles saw the earthworks of the small fort at the foot of Drakensberg appear in front, with a little Union Jack fluttering on a flagstaff.

This was about mid-day.

Anxious to return as soon as he could rest his horse, he lost no time in delivering Sheldrake's note to the officer in command, and with the key of a trunk indicated therein among his best uniform, and amid girls' photos, bundles of letters, old button bouquets, rare pipes, and an omniumgatherum of various things, the bag was found, with the company's money, and delivered to Florian, who, after a two hours' halt, set out on his return journey; but he had not proceeded many miles when he found that his horse was utterly failing him, and, regretting that he had not remained at the post for the night, he resolved to spend it in the little town of Elandsbergen, towards which he bent his way, leading the now halting nag by the bridle.

Elandsbergen consisted of a few widely detached cottages studding both sides of a broad pathway, amid a vast expanse of veldt or prairie, with fragmentary attempts at cultivation here and there; and how the people lived seemed somewhat of a mystery. Rows of stunted oaks lined the street, if such it could be called, and through it flowed a rill of pure water, at which the poor nag drank thirstily.

Elandsbergen boasted of one hostelry, dignified by the title of the Royal Hotel, where 'civil entertainment for man and beast' was promised by the landlord, 'Josh Jarrett.' It was a somewhat substantial edifice of two storeys, built of baked brick, square in form, with a flat roof composed of strong lattice-work, covered with half-bricks and with clayey mortar to render it impervious to the torrents of the South African rainy season.



In some of the windows were glass panes ; in others sheep-skin with the wool off, which, in consequence of extreme tension, attains a certain transparency. Giving his horse to a Kaffir ostler, whose sole raiment was a waistcoat made of a sleeveless regimental tunic, Florian somewhat wearily entered the 'hotel,' the proprietor of which started and changed colour at the sight of his red coat, as well he might, for though disguised by a bushy beard, sedulously cultivated, and a shock head of hair under his broad-leaved hat, he was one of the many deserters from our troops, already referred to, and, though apparently anxious to appear civil, was secretly a ruffian of the worst kind.

The room into which he ushered Florian was bare-walled, the furniture was of the plainest and rudest kind, and the floor was formed of cow-dung over wet clay, all kneaded, trodden, and hardened till it could be polished, a process learned from the Zulus in the construction of their kraals.

A fly-blown map of Cape Colony, a cheap portrait of Sir Bartle Frere, and the skull of an eland with its spiral horns, were the only decorations of the apartment, and the literature of 'the day' was represented by three tattered copies of the *Cape Argus*, *Natal Mercury*, and the *Boer Volksteen*.

Josh Jarrett was dressed like a Boer, and in person was quite as dirty as a Boer ; his loose cracker-trousers were girt by a broad belt with a square buckle, whereat hung a leopard-skin pouch and an ugly hunting-knife with a cross hilt. In the band of his broad hat were stuck a large meerschaum pipe and the tattered remnant of an ostrich feather.

The Kaffir ostler now came hurriedly in, and announced something in his own language to the landlord, who turning abruptly to Florian, said :

'You are in something of a fix, Sergeant !'

'How—what do you mean ?' demanded Florian.

'That your horse is dying.'

'Dying !'

'Yes, of the regular horse-sickness.'

Florian, in no small anxiety and excitement, hurried out to the stable, in which two other nags were stalled, and there he

saw the poor animal he had ridden lying among the straw in strong convulsions, labouring under that curse of South Africa, the horse-sickness, a most mysterious disorder, which had suddenly attacked it.

The animal had looked sullen and dull all morning, and in the stable had been assailed by the distemper and its usual symptoms—heaving flanks, disturbed breathing, glassy eyes, and a projecting tongue tightly clenched between the teeth. Then came the convulsions, and he was dead in half an hour, and Florian found that he would probably have to travel afoot for more than twenty miles before he could rejoin the column on the morrow.

‘Where have you come from, Sergeant?’ asked Josh Jarrett, when they returned to the public room.

‘The fort at the Drakensberg, last.’

‘Taking French leave, eh?’ said Jarrett, with a portentous wink and brightening eye.

‘Not at all!’ replied Florian, indignantly.

‘Fellows do so every day now in these short-service times.’

‘I was going to the front, when my horse fell lame.’

‘Belong to the Mounted Infantry?’

‘The dismounted now, I think,’ replied Florian. ‘I should like to rest here for the night, and push on as best I can to-morrow; so what can I have for supper?’

Josh Jarrett paused a moment, as if he thought a sergeant’s purse would not go far in the way of luxuries, and then replied:

‘Rasher of bacon and eggs, or dried beef and a good glass of squareface or Cape smoke, which you please.’

‘The first will do, and a glass of the squareface, which means Hollands, I suppose. Cape smoke is a disagreeable spirit,’ replied Florian wearily, as he took off his helmet and seated himself in a large cane-bottomed chair.

‘Won’t you lay aside your revolver?’ asked Jarrett.

‘Thanks—well, no—I am used to it.’

‘As you please,’ said the other surlily, and summoning in a loud voice a female named ‘Nan,’ left the room.

The latter laid the table, brought in the frugal supper, with a case-bottle of squareface, and instead of leaving the room, seated herself near a window and entered into conversation, with what object Florian scarcely knew, but he disliked the circumstance, till he began to remember that she probably considered herself his equal.

When his hasty repast was over, taking a hint from a remark that he was weary, she withdrew, and then Florian began to consider the situation.

He was fully twenty miles from the regiment; a rough country, not to be traversed even by daylight, infested with wild animals, and many obnoxious things, such as puff-adders, perhaps Zulus, lay between; and unless Jarrett would accommodate him with a horse, which was very unlikely (he seemed such a sullen and forbidding fellow), he would have to travel the journey on foot, and begin betimes on the morrow as soon as dawn would enable him to see the track eastward.

He examined Sheldrake's handsome revolver and its ammunition, reloading the six chambers carefully. Then he thought of the company's money; and tempted, he knew not by what rash impulse, unless it was mere boyish curiosity, he untied the red tape by which the paymaster had secured the mouth of the bag, to have a peep at the gold.

He had never seen a hundred sovereigns before, and never before had so much money in his possession. Some of the glittering coins fell out on the clay floor; and as he gathered them up a sound made him look round, and from the window he saw a human face suddenly vanish outside, thus showing that some one had, hitherto unnoticed, been furtively watching him, and he strongly suspected it to be the woman Nan, prompted, perhaps, by idle curiosity, and in haste he concealed the gold.

He was the more convinced of the lurker being she when, soon after, she entered, retook her seat by the window, through which the evening sun was streaming now, and began to address him in a light and flippant manner, as if to get up a flirtation with him for ulterior purposes; but his suspicions were awakened now, and Florian was on his guard.



He perceived that she had made some alterations and improvements in her tawdry dress, and had hung in her ears a pair of large old-fashioned Dutch ear-rings, shaped like small rams' horns, of real gold.

She seemed to be about thirty years of age, and was not without personal attractions, though all bloom was past, and the expression of her face was marred by its being alternately leering, mocking, and—even in spite of herself—cruel. Yet her eyes were dark and sparkling. She wore a fringe of thick brown hair close down to them, concealing nearly all her forehead. Her mouth, if large, was handsome, but lascivious-looking; and Florian, whose barrack-room experience had somewhat 'opened his eyes,' thought—though he was not ungallant enough to say so—that her absence would be preferable to her company, which she seemed resolved to thrust upon him. But guests were doubtless scarce in these parts, and the 'Royal Hotel,' Elandsbergen, had probably not many visitors.

She asked him innumerable questions—his age, country, regiment, and so forth—and all in a wheedling, coaxing way; toyed with his hair, and once attempted to seat herself on his knee; but he rose and repelled her, and then it was that the unmistakably cruel expression came flashing into her eyes.

'You are too young and too handsome to be killed and disembowelled by the big Zulus,' said she after a pause; 'they could eat a boy like you. Why don't you desert and go to the Diamond Fields?'

'Thank you; I would rather die than do that!'

'And so you serve the Queen, my dear?' she said, sneeringly.

'Yes.'

'For what reason do you fight the poor Zulus?'

'Honour,' replied Florian, curtly.

'I have read—I have some book-knowledge, you see—that when a Swiss officer was reproached by a French one that he fought for pay, and not, like himself, for honour, "So be it," replied the Swiss; "we each of us fight for that which he is most in need of."'

'I don't see the allusion in this instance : a soldier, I do my duty and obey orders.'

'Have a drop more of the squareface—you can't be so rude as to refuse a lady,' she continued, filling up a long glass, which she put to her lips, and then to those of Florian, who pretended to sip, and then put the glass down.

He was at a loss to understand her and her advances. Vanity quite apart, he knew that he was a good-looking young fellow, and that his uniform 'set him off'; but he remembered the face at the window, and was on his guard against her in every way. Would she have acted thus with an officer? he thought; and in what relation did she stand to the truculent-looking landlord—wife, daughter, or sister? Probably none of them at all.

Suddenly her mood changed, or appeared to do so, and seating herself at a rickety old piano, which Florian had not noticed before, she, while eyeing him waggishly, proceeded to sing a once-popular flash-song, long since forgotten in England, and probably taken out by some ancient settler, generations ago, to the Cape Colony :

'If I was a wife, and my dearest life  
Took it into his noddle to die,  
Ere I took the whim to be buried with him,  
I think I'd know very well *why*.

'If poignant my grief, I'd search for relief—  
Not sink with the weight of my care :  
A salve might be found, no doubt, above ground,  
And I think I know very well *where*.

'Another kind mate should give me what fate  
Would not from the former allow ;  
With him I'd amuse the hours you abuse,  
And I think I'd know very well *how*.

'Tis true I'm a maid, and so't may be said  
No judge of the conjugal lot ;  
Yet marriage, I ween, has a cure for the spleen,  
And I think I know very well *what*.'

This she sang with a skill and power that savoured of the music-hall, and then tried her blandishments again to induce Florian to drink of the fiery squareface ; but he resisted all her inducement to take 'just one little glass more.'

Why was she so anxious that he should imbibe that treacherous spirit, which he would have to pay for ? And why did the landlord, who certainly seemed full of curiosity about him, leave him so entirely in her society ?

Suddenly the voice of the latter was heard shouting, 'Nan, Nan !'

'That is Josh,' said she, impatiently ; 'bother him, what does he want now ? Josh is getting old, and nothing improves by age.'

'Except brandy,' said Florian smiling, as he now hoped to be rid of her.

'Right ; and squareface, perhaps. Have one glass more, dear, before I leave you.'

But he turned impatiently away, and she withdrew, closing a scene which caused Florian much suspicion and perplexity. He remembered to have read, that 'man destroys with the horns of a bull, or with paws like a bear ; woman by nibbling like a mouse, or by embracing like a serpent.' And he was in toils here unseen as yet !

The light faded out beyond the dark ridges of the Drakensberg, and Florian requested to be shown to his sleeping apartment, which was on the upper storey.

'You may hear a roaring lot here by-and-bye,' said his host ; 'but you are a soldier, and I dare say will sleep sound enough. You will be tired, too, after your ride.'

The man had now a sneaking and wicked look in his eyes, which avoided meeting those of Florian, and which the latter did not like, but there was no help for it then.

'You will call me early if I sleep too long,' said Florian, as Jarrett gave him a candle.

The hand of the latter shook as he did so—he had evidently been drinking heavily, and his yellow-balled eyes were blood-shot, and his voice thick, as he said :



'Good-night, Sergeant; you'll sleep sound enough,' and closed the door.

With a sigh almost of relief Florian found himself alone. He set down the sputtering candle, and turned to fasten the door. It was without a lock, and secured only by a latch, by which it could be opened from the outside as well as within.

On making this startling discovery, Florian's heart glowed with indignation and growing alarm. He felt himself trapped!

---

## CHAPTER XX.

### BAFFLED.

THE room was small, low-ceiled, and its only furniture was a table, chair, and truckle-bed—all obviously of Dutch construction—and, unless he could find some means to secure his door, he resolved to remain awake till dawn. The only window in the room overlooked the roof of the stable where the dead horse lay. The sash was loose, and shook in the night wind, and he could see the bright and, to him, new constellations glittering in the southern sky.

Florian contrived to secure the door by placing the chair on the floor as a wedge or barrier between it and the bedstead, on the mattress of which—though not very savoury in appearance—he cast himself, for he was weary, worn, and felt that there was an absolute necessity for husbanding his strength, as he knew not what might be before him, so he extinguished the candle.

Something in the general aspect and bearing of the man Josh Jarrett, and in those of the woman, with her efforts to intoxicate him, and something, too, in his general surroundings and isolated situation—for the few scattered houses of Elands-bergen were all far apart—together with the memory of the prying face he had seen at the window, at the very moment he was picking up the gold, all served to put Florian on his guard;

thus he lay down without undressing, and, longing only for daylight, grasped ever and anon the butt of his pistol.

For some time past he had been unused to the luxury of even a truckle-bed or other arrangements for repose than his grey great-coat and ammunition blanket, with a knapsack for a pillow ; hence, despite his keen anxiety, he must have dropped asleep, for how long he knew not ; but he suddenly started up as the sound of voices below came to his ear, and the full sense of his peculiar whereabouts rushed on him.

Voices ! They were coarse and deep, but not loud—voices of persons talking in low and concentrated tones in the room beneath, separated from him only by the ill-fitting boarding of the floor, between the joints of which lines of light were visible, and one bright upward flake, through a hole from which a knot had dropped out.

‘Curse him, he’s but a boy ; I could smash the life out of him by one blow of my fist !’ he heard his host, Josh Jarrett, say.

Others responded to this, but in low, stealthy, and husky tones. Certain that some mischief with regard to himself was on the *tapis*, Florian crept softly to the orifice in the floor, and looked down. Round a dirty and sloppy table, covered with drinking-vessels, pipes and tobacco-pouches, bottles of square-face and Cape smoke, were Josh Jarrett and three other ruffians, digger-like fellows, with Nan among them, all drinking ; and a vile-looking quintette they were, especially the woman, with her hair all dishevelled now, and her face inflamed by that maddening compound known as Cape smoke.

‘When I was ass enough to be in the Queen’s service,’ said Jarrett with a horrible imprecation, ‘these ’ere blooming officers and non-comms. led me a devil of a life ; they said it was my own fault that I was always drunk and in the mill. Be that as it may, I’ve one of the cursed lot upstairs, and I’ll sarve him out for what they made me undergo, cuss ’em. One will answer my purpose as well as another. Nan, you did your best to screw him, but he was wary—infernally wary. Blest if I don’t think the fellow is a Scotchman after all, for all his English lingo.’

'Yes, he did shirk his liquor,' hiccoughed the amiable Nan; 'you should have drugged it, Josh.'

'But then we didn't know that he had all this chink about him.'

'That must be ours,' growled a fellow who had not yet spoken, but was prodding the table with a knife he had drawn from his belt; 'we'll give him a through ticket to the other world—one with the down train.'

'And no return,' added Nan, laughing.

Florian felt beads of perspiration on his brow; he was one against five—entrapped, baited, done to death; and if he did not appear at headquarters with the fatal money, what would be thought of him but that he had deserted with it, and his name would be branded as that of a coward and robber?

Dulcie! The thought of Dulcie choked him, but it nerved him too.

Another truculent-looking fellow now came in, making five men in all.

'He has money galore on him—Nan saw the gold—money in a canvas bag. How comes he, a sergeant, to have all this in his grab, unless he stole it?' said Jarrett, in explanation to the new-comer.

'Of course he stole it—it's regimental money, and evidently he is deserting with it,' said the other, who was, no doubt, like Jarrett, a Queen's bad bargain also; for he added, 'What the devil do Cardwell's short-service soldiers care about their chances of pension or promotion—that's the reason he has the bag of gold; so why shouldn't we make it ours? It is only dolloping a knife into him, and then burying him out in the veldt before daylight. Even if he was traced here, who is to be accountable for a deserter?'

And this practical ruffian proceeded at once to put a finer edge and point upon his long bowie-knife.

'You forget that he has a revolver,' said Nan.

'I don't,' said Jarrett; 'but he ain't likely to use it in his sleep, especially when we pin him by the throat.'

He was but one against five armed and reckless desperadoes;



and there was the woman, too, whose hands were ready for evil work. The stair that led to his room was narrow—so much so that there was but space for one on a step. The lower or outer door he knew to be securely locked and bolted. The window of his room, we have said, overlooked the lean-to roof of the stable, where he knew that two horses were in stall—a sure means of escape could he reach one; but the door, he was aware, was locked, and the key in possession of the Kaffir groom.

He was maddened by the thought that his barbarous and obscure death would brand him with a double disgrace; and death is more than ever hard when suffered at the hands of cowards.

‘What is the use of all this blooming talk?’ said one, starting from the table; ‘let us set about the job at once!’

‘Look you,’ said Jarrett, ‘if roused he’ll perhaps try to escape by the stable roof, so while you fellows go up the stair, I go round to the back of the house and cut off his retreat.’

‘The stable-roof,’ thought Florian; ‘my only chance lies that way.’

He opened the window at the very moment that stealthy steps sounded on the wooden stair, and a red light streamed under the door, which their felon hands failed to force, so firmly was the chair wedged between it and the bed. He slid down the stable-roof, and dropped safely on the ground, to be faced by Josh Jarrett, who came rushing on, knife in hand, but Florian shot him down, firing two chambers into his very teeth, and then he sprang away like a hare out into the open veldt, leaving the ruffian wallowing in his blood.

He knew not and cared not in what direction he ran at first, as he could hear the oaths and imprecations of his pursuers, over whom his youth, lightness, and activity gave him an advantage; but after a time red dawn began to streak the eastern sky, and he knew that was the direction which, if he was spared, would take him to the bank of the Buffalo River.

He continued to run at a good steady double, saving his wind as he did so, and his courage and confidence rose when

he found that he was distancing his pursuers so much that he could neither see nor hear anything of them.

As he ran on he thought for a moment or two of the fierce gleaming eyes and glistening teeth of Jarrett—of the blood he had shed, and the life he had perhaps taken for the first time, remorsefully ; but had he not acted thus, what would he have been? A gashed corpse !

‘Bah !’ he said aloud, ‘I am a soldier—why such thoughts at all? Why should I have mercy when these wretches would have had none?’ and he began to regret that he had not fired a random shot or two through the room-door and knocked over some of them on the staircase.

A sound now struck his ear ; it was the thud of galloping hoofs upon the veldt, and his heart sank as he remembered the two horses in the stable, where his dead nag was lying.

He looked back, and there, sure enough, in the grey dawn were two mounted men riding in scouting fashion, far apart, and he could not for a moment doubt they were two of Jarrett’s companions in pursuit, thirsting with avarice and for revenge.

He made his way, stumbling wildly and breathlessly down a wooded ravine to elude their sight ; on and on he strove till a vine-root caught his foot : his hands outstretched beat the air for a moment, and then he fell headlong forward and downward into a donga full of brushwood.

For a moment he had a sense of strange palms, and giant cacti, and of great plants with long spiky leaves being about him, and then he became unconscious as he lay there stunned and bleeding profusely from a wound in his forehead, which had come in contact with a stone.

---

## CHAPTER XXI.

### SEPARATED.

‘SOMETHING must be done, and deuced soon too, to separate this pair of spoons, or else they will be corresponding by letter,

somehow or anyhow, after he has taken himself off; and Lady Fettercairn is always saying it is high time that something was definitely arranged between the girl and me! But, of course, Finella thinks *him* handsome enough to be the hero of a three-volume novel.'

Thus muttered Shafto, who, after a long absence, had returned to Craigengowan again, believing that Hammersley must now be gone; but he found, to his extreme annoyance, that two days of that officer's visit yet remained; so, with the futile *fracas* about the cards in his mind, Shafto avoided him as much as possible, and the house and grounds were ample enough to give him every scope for doing so.

He was sedulously bent on working mischief, and Fate so arranged that, on the second day, he had the power to do so.

They were on the very eve of separation now, yet Finella knew their love was mutual and true, and a glow of exultation was mingled with the sadness of her heart—a glow which had a curious touch of fear in it, as if such joy in his faith and truth could not be lasting. It was a kind of foreboding of evil about to happen, and when the time came that foreboding was remembered.

On the day of Hammersley's departure, he was to leave Craigengowan before dinner: thus, after luncheon, he contrived, unseen, to slip a little note into her hand. It contained but two lines:

'Darling, meet me in the Howe of Craigengowan an hour hence, for the last time. Do not fail.

'V. H.'

She read it again and again, kissed it, of course, and slipped it into her bosom.

To avoid everyone, and to be alone with her own thoughts, she ran upstairs to the top of the house—to the summit of the old Scottish square tower, which was the nucleus whereon much had been engrafted even before the Melforts came to hold it, and going through a turret door which opened on the stone bartizan—a pleasant promenade—she sat down breathlessly, not to enjoy the lovely landscape which stretched around her,



where Bervie Brow and Gourdon Hill were already casting their shadows eastward, but to wait and re-read her tiny note.

She put her hand into her bosom to draw it forth; but it was gone—she had lost it—and her first thought was, into whose hands might it fall!

She had a kind of stunned feeling at first, and then a glow of indignation that she should be treated like a child, in awe of Lady Fettercairn, and in a state of tutelage.

Vincent Hammersley went to the trysting-place betimes—the shady Howe of Craigengowan. The evening air was heavy with the fresh, pungent fragrance of the Scottish pines, the flat boughs of which nearly met overhead thickly enough to exclude the sunshine, which here and there found its way through breaks in the bronze-green canopy, and fell like rays of gold on the thick grass and pine cones below; but there was no appearance of Finella.

Shafto had resolved to achieve a separation between these two, we have said, and evil fortune put the power to do so completely in his hands.

Before Finella could reach the meeting-place among the shrubberies in the lawn, she came face to face with Shafto.

‘Shafto!’ she exclaimed, with intense annoyance, as she recoiled, ‘you here—I did not know that you had returned.’

‘And didn’t care, no doubt? Yes—you are on the way to meet some one else?’

‘How do you know that?’

‘I found his little note to you.’

‘Where?’

‘At the foot of the turret stair.’

‘And you dared to read it!’

‘It was open. Dared!—well, I like that. Let us be friends at least.’

‘I have much to pardon in you, Shafto,’ said she, remembering the unpleasant trick he had played Hammersley about the cards.

‘Let us understand each other, Finella.’

‘I thought we did so already,’ said she defiantly, and

impatiently at his untimely presence ; 'surely we have spoken plainly enough before this.'

His face was pale, and there was an expression of mischief in his eyes that startled her. It was mere jealous rage that acted love. He caught her hand, and, fearing him at that moment, she did not withdraw it, but did so eventually and sharply.

'What folly is this?' exclaimed Shafto. 'Do not shrink from me thus, Finella, but allow me to make a last appeal to you. I cannot think that you are so utterly changed towards me, but that you are wilfully blinding yourself.'

'This is intolerable!' exclaimed the girl passionately, knowing that precious time was passing, that Vivian had but a minute or two to spare to receive a farewell kiss and last assurance of her love.

'You used to love me, I think, in past days, before this man Hammersley came here?'

'I knew and loved him in London before I ever heard of your existence,' she exclaimed, wound up to a pitch of desperation. 'Give me up my note—I see it in your hand.'

'His note?'

'Mine, I say.'

'You shall not have it for nothing then.'

'What do you mean?'

'Precisely what I say, pretty cousin. I must have some reward,' and holding the note before her at arm's-length he again captured her right hand.

'Restore my property. Would you be guilty of theft?'

'No,' replied Shafto, laughing now with triumphant malice, as he remembered Dulcie Carlyon and her locket. 'But what will you give me for it?'

'What *can* I give you?'

'Something better than your grandmother will for it—a kiss, freely,' said he softly, as he saw what Finella did *not* see—Vivian Hammersley between the shrubberies, pausing in his approach, loth to compromise her, yet perplexed and startled by the presence of Shafto and the bearing of both.

Finella flashed a defiant glance at her tormentor, but aware

that he was capable of much mischief, lest he might make some troublesome use of the note with her grand-parents, of whom she certainly stood in some awe, she was inclined to temporise with him.

‘If I give you a kiss, cousin Shafto, will you please give me my note?’ she asked.

‘Yes,’ said he, and his heart leaped.

‘Take it, then.’

She put up her sweet and innocent face to his, but instead of taking one, he clasped her close to his breast, and holding her tightly, he daringly and roughly kissed again and again the soft lips that he had never touched before save in his day-dreams, and all this was in sight of Vivian Hammersley, as he very well knew, and the latter, to Shafto’s secret and intense exultation, silently drew back and disappeared.

Shafto had certainly then his moment of triumph!

Finella was greatly relieved when she obtained possession of her note; but her proud little heart was full of fury and indignation at the unwarrantable proceedings of Shafto, who hung or hovered about her just long enough to preclude all hope of her meeting with Hammersley, and when, full of sorrow, she returned to the house, she could see nothing of him, but was told by Grapeston, the old butler, that his departure had been suddenly hastened; that the trap was already at the hall-door to take him to the station, and the captain had charged him with a note for her.

It was hastily written in pencil, and a pencilled address was on the envelope. It ran thus:—

‘I went at the appointed time. You did not come, but I saw you *elsewhere* in the arms of your cousin, who doubtless has been hereabout for some time past, unknown to me. *Those were no cousinly kisses you gave him.* God may forgive your falsehood, but I never will!’

The room seemed to swim round her as she read and re-read the lines like one in a dream. As she did so for the second time, and took in the whole situation, a cry almost escaped her. Then she heard some farewells hastily exchanged on the



terrace, and the sound of wheels on gravel as the departing waggonette swept Hammersley away to the railway station, and no power or chance of explanation was left her.

The false light through which he—so brave, so true and honourable—must now view her tortured and humiliated her, and unmerited shame, mingled with just anger, burned in her heart. And Shafto had brought all this about !

Oh for language to describe her loathing of him ! His was the mistake—the crime to be explained ; but would it ever be explained ? And she dared not complain to Lord and Lady Fettercairn, who openly abetted Shafto's avaricious aspirations as regarded herself.

She rushed away to her own room, lighted candles, and locked herself in. She sat down by the dressing-table ; was that wan face reflected in the mirror hers ? She leaned her elbows on the former, with her face in her hands, and sat there sobbing heavily in grief and rage without ever sighing, though her heart felt full to bursting.

She pleaded a headache as an excuse for non-appearance at dinner, and Lord and Lady Fettercairn exchanged a silent glance of mutual intelligence and annoyance, not unmingled, perhaps, with satisfaction.

Finella sat in her room as if turned to stone ; at last she heard the stable clock strike midnight, and mechanically she proceeded to undress without summoning her maid.

A rosebud was in the rich cream-tinted lace about her pretty neck. *He* had given it to her but that morning, as they lingered on the terrace, and with haggard eyes she looked at it, kissed it, and put it in her white bosom.

This morning she was with him—her lover, her affianced husband—her own—and he was hers—all to each other in the world—and *now* !

'He hates me, most probably,' she murmured.

A few days stole away, and she tried to act a part, for watchful eyes were upon her. Hammersley was gone ! Doubly gone ! How she missed his presence was known only to herself. He was ever so sweetly but not obtrusively tender ; so

quick of wit, ready in attention and speech, though the envious Shafto phrased it, 'he would coax a bird off a tree.' He was so gentlemanly and gallant—every way such irreproachably good style, that she loved him with all the strength of her loving and passionate nature.

The memory of the past—of her lost happiness—lost more than she might ever know, through the deliberate villainy of Shafto, rose ever before her with vivid distinctness; the evening on which their love was avowed in the drawing-room—the evening in the Howe of Craigengowan, when he gave her the two rings, and many other chance or concerted meetings, were before her now, and she could but clasp her hands tightly, while a heavy sob rose in her throat.

The wedding ring, he had given her to keep, was often drawn forth fondly, and slipped on her wedding finger in secret—a temptation of Fate, as any old Scotchwoman would have told her. She would have written a letter of explanation to Hammersley, but knew not where to address him; and ere long the announcement in a public print that he had sailed from Plymouth with a strong detachment of the 2nd Warwickshire, for the seat of war in South Africa, put it out of her power to do so, and she had but to bear her misery helplessly.

More than ever were they now separated!

---

## CHAPTER XXII.

### AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

LADY FETTERCAIRN was in the drawing-room at Craigengowan, and talking with Shafto seriously and affectionately on the subject of Finella and the wishes of herself and Lord Fettercairn; and Shafto was making himself most agreeable to his 'grandmother,' for he was still in high glee and elfish good humour at the mode in which he had 'choked off that interloper, Hammersley,' when a valet announced that an elderly woman 'wished to speak with her ladyship.'

‘What is her name?’

‘She declined to say.’

‘Is she one of our own people?’

‘I think not, my lady.’

‘But what can she want?’

‘She would not say—it was a private matter, she admitted.’

‘Very odd.’

‘She is most anxious to see your ladyship.’

‘It is some begging petition, of course,’ said Shafto ; ‘desire her to be off.’

‘It may be so, sir.’

‘Then show her the door.’

‘She seems very respectable, sir,’ urged the valet.

‘But poor—the old story.’

‘Show her in,’ said Lady Fettercairn.

The elderly woman appeared, and curtseyed deeply twice in a graceful and old-fashioned manner. Her once black hair was now seamed with white ; but her eyes were dark and sparkling ; her cheeks were yet tinged with red, and her rows of teeth were firm and white as ever, for the visitor was Madelon Galbraith, now in her sixtieth year, and with the assured confidence of a Highland woman she announced herself by name.

‘I read in the papers,’ said she, ‘that the grandson of Lord Fettercairn had shot some beautiful eaglets at the ruins of Finella’s castle. The grandson, thought I—that maun be the bairn I nursed, as I nursed his mother before him, and so I’m come a’ the way frae Ross-shire to see him, your leddyship.’

‘I have heard of you, Madelon, and that you were in early life nurse to—to my younger son’s wife,’ said Lady Fettercairn, with a freezing stare and slight inclination of her haughty head ; but she added, ‘be seated.’

‘Yes—I was nurse to Captain MacIan’s daughter Flora,’ said Madelon, her eyes becoming moist ; ‘the Captain saved my husband’s life in the Persian war, but was killed himself next day.’

‘What have we to do with this?’ said Shafto, who felt himself growing pale.



‘Nothing, of course,’ replied Madelon, sadly.

‘Then what do you want?’

‘What I have said. I heard that the son of Major Melfort—or MacIan, as he called himself in the past time—was here at Craigengowan, and I made sae bold as to ca’ and see him—the bairn I hae suckled.’

‘If you nursed my grandson, as you say,’ said Lady Fettercairn, ‘do you not recognise him? Stand forward, Shafto.’

‘Shafto—is this Mr. Shafto!’ exclaimed Madelon.

‘Yes, my son Leonard’s son.’

‘Shafto Gyle!’ said Madelon, bewildered.

‘What *do* you mean?’

‘What I say, my leddy.’

‘This is Major Melfort’s only son.’

‘Only nephew! The bairn I nursed—the son of Lennard Melfort, and my darling Flora—was named after her, Florian, and was like herself, dark-haired, dark-eyed, and winsome. Where is he? What is the meaning of this, Mr. Shafto? I recognise ye now, though years hae passed since I saw ye.’

‘She is mad or drunk!’ exclaimed Shafto, starting up savagely.

‘I am neither,’ said Madelon, firmly and defiantly.

‘Turn her out of the house!’ said Shafto, with his hand on the bell.

‘There is some trick here—where is Florian?’

‘How the devil should I know, or be accountable for him to a creature like you?’

‘Ay, ay, Mr. Shafto, as a bairn ye were aye crafty, shrewd, and evil-natured, and if a lie could hae chokit ye, ye wad hae been deid lang syne.’

‘This is most unseemly language, Madelon Galbraith,’ said Lady Fettercairn, rising from her chair, ‘and to me it seems that you are raving.’

‘Unseemly here or unseemly there, it is the truth,’ said Madelon, stoutly, and, sooth to say, Lady Fettercairn’s estimation and knowledge of Shafto’s character endorsed the description given of it by Madelon.

‘Florian was dark, and you are, as you were, fair and fause too ; and Florian had what you have not, and never had, a black mole-mark on his right arm.’

‘Such marks pass away,’ said Shafto.

‘No, these marks never pass away!’ retorted Madelon ; ‘there is some devilry at work here. I say, where is Florian ? Ay, ay,’ she continued ; ‘my bairn, Florian, was born on a Friday, and a Friday’s birth, like a Friday’s marriage, seldom is fortunate ; but this is no my bonnie black-eyed lad, Lady Fettercairn—so *where* is he ?’

‘This is intolerable !’ said Lady Fettercairn, whom that name by old association of ideas seemed to irritate, and, on a valet appearing in obedience to a furious ring given to the bell by Shafto, she added, ‘Show this intruder out of the house, and do so instantly.’

The man was about to put his hand on Madelon, but the old Highland woman drew herself up with an air of defiance, and swept out of the room without another word.

‘See her not only out of the house, but off the grounds,’ shouted Shafto, who was almost beside himself with rage and genuine fear. ‘Nay, I’ll see to that myself,’ he added. ‘Such lunatics are dangerous.’

Seeing her hastening down the avenue, he whistled from the stable court a huge mastiff, and by voice and action hounded it on her. The dog bounded about her, barking furiously, and tore her skirts, to her infinite terror, till the lodge-keeper dragged it off and closed the gates upon her. Then she went upon her way, her Highland heart bursting with rage and longing for revenge.

Shafto was glad that Lord Fettercairn was absent, as he might have questioned Madelon Galbraith more closely ; but to his cost he was eventually to learn that he had not seen the last of Florian’s nurse.

This visit, taken in conjunction with the mode in which Finella now treated him, made Craigengowan somewhat uncomfortable for Shafto, so he betook himself to Edinburgh, and to drown his growing fears plunged into such a mad career of

dissipation and extravagance that Lord Fettercairn began to regret that he had ever discovered an heir to his estates at all.

While there Shafto saw in the newspaper posters one day the announcement of the terrible disaster at Isandhlwana, 'with the total extirpation of the 24th Warwickshire Foot !'

'*His* regiment, by Jove ! I'll have a drink over this good news,' thought the amiable Shafto, and certainly a deep 'drink' he did have.

---

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A BRUSH WITH THE ZULUS.

WHEN Florian recovered consciousness the African sun was high in the sky ; but he lay still for a space in his leafy concealment, as he knew not what time had elapsed since he had last seen his mounted pursuers, or how far or how near they might be off.

Dried blood plastered all one side of his face, and blood was still oozing from the wound in his temple. Over it he tied his handkerchief, and with his white helmet off—as it was a conspicuous object—he clambered to the edge of the donga and looked about him.

The vast extent of waste and open veldt spread around him, but no living object was visible thereon. His pursuers must have ridden forward or returned to Elandsbergen without searching the donga, and thus he was, for the time at least, free from them.

In the distance he saw the Drakensberg range, and knew that his way lay westward in the opposite direction. It is the name given to a portion of the Quathlamba Mountains, which form the boundary between the Free States, Natal, and the land of the Basutos. They rise to a height of nine thousand feet, and their topography is imperfectly known.

Having assured himself that he was unwatched and unseen,



Florian quitted the donga, and, after an anxious search of an hour or more, succeeded in striking upon the ruts or wheel-tracks that must lead, he knew, to the camp at Rorke's Drift, beside the Buffalo River, and then he steadily, though weary and somewhat faint, proceeded upon his return journey.

How many miles he walked he knew not—there were no stones to mark them; but evening was at hand, and he had traversed a district of *ruggens*, as it is called there—a succession of many grassy ridges—before an exclamation of supreme satisfaction escaped him, when he saw the white bell-tents of Colonel Glyn's column, pitched on the grassy veldt beside the winding stream, and, passing the advanced sentinels, he lost no time in reporting himself to Sheldrake, and relieving himself also of that unlucky gold which had so nearly cost him his life.

Sheldrake sent instantly for Dr. Gallipott, a staff-surgeon, who dressed Florian's hurt. In the bearing of the latter as he related his late adventures, Sheldrake was struck with a certain grave simplicity or quiet dignity—an air of ease and perfect self-possession—far above his present position.

'You are "not what you seem to be," as novels have it?' said the young officer inquiringly.

'I am a soldier, sir, as my——' (father was before me, he was about to say, but paused in, confusion, and substituted) 'as my fate decided for me.'

Impressed by his whole story and the terrible risks and toil he had undergone, young Sheldrake offered a substantial money reward to Florian, who coloured painfully at the proposal, drew back, with just the slightest air of hauteur, and declined it.

'You are somewhat of an enigma to me,' said the puzzled officer.

'Is there any news in camp, sir?'

'Only that we enter Zululand to-morrow, and a draft from home joined us to-day under Captain Hammersley.'

Florian heard the name of Captain Hammersley without much concern, save that he was one of the same corps. He little foresaw how much their names and interests would be mingled in the future.

'Here he comes,' said Sheldrake, as the handsome officer in his fresh uniform came lounging, cigar in mouth, into the tent, and Florian, with a salute, withdrew. Ere he did so :

'Tom,' said Sheldrake to his servant, 'tell the messman to give the sergeant a bottle of good wine ; he'll need it to keep up his pecker after last night's work and with the work before us to-morrow.'

Florian thanked the officer and retired ; and he and Bob Edgehill shared the contents of the bottle, while the latter listened to his narration.

'You have grown to look very grave, Hammersley,' said Sheldrake ; 'of what are you thinking so much?'

'Nothing.'

'Nothing?'

'Yes ; the best way to get through life is *not* to think at all,' replied Hammersley, bitterly, for his thoughts were ever and always of Finella and that fatal evening in the shrubbery at Craigengowan, where he saw her lift up her face to Shafto, who kissed her as though he had been used to do so all his life.

Colonel Glyn's column consisted of seven companies of his own regiment, the 24th, the Natal Mounted Police, a body of Volunteers, two 7-pounder Royal Artillery guns under Major Harness, and 1000 natives under Rupert Lonsdale, late of the 74th Highlanders.

At half-past three on the morning of the 12th of January, the colonel, with four companies, some of the Natal Native Contingent, and the mounted men, left his camp to reconnoitre the country of Sirayo, which lay to the eastward of it. With his staff, Lord Chelmsford accompanied this party, which, after a few miles' march, reached a great donga, in a valley through which the Bashee River flows, and wherein herds of cattle were collected, and their lowing loaded the calm morning air, though they were all unseen, being concealed in the rocky krantzes or precipitous fissures of the ravine.

A body of Zulus now appeared on the hills above, and Florian regarded them with intense interest, while the mounted men advanced against them, and his company, with the others,

pushed in skirmishing order up the ravine where the cattle were known to be.

He could see that these Zulu warriors were models of muscle and athletic activity, and nearly black-skinned rather than copper-coloured. They were dressed in feathers, with the tails of wild animals round their bodies, behind and before; their ornaments were massive rings formed of elephants' tusks, and their anklets were of brass or polished copper; they had large oval shields, rifles, and bundles or sheafs of assegais, their native deadly weapon, and they bounded from rock to rock before our skirmishers with the activity of tree tigers.

'With the assegai,' says Sir Arthur Cunynghame, 'the Zulu cuts his food, he fights and does many useful things, and it is used as a surgical instrument. Carefully sharpening it, he uses it to bleed the human patient, and with it he inoculates his cow's tail. In the chase it is his spear, a deadly weapon in his hand, and ready instrument for skinning his game.'

The orders of the main body of this reconnoitring force, which had suddenly become an attacking one, were to ascend a hill on the left, then to work round to the right rear of the enemy's position, and assault and destroy a kraal belonging to the brother of Sirayo, whose surrender the Government had demanded as one of the violators of the British territory.

The moment the companies of the 24th got into motion, a sharp fire was opened on them by the Zulus, who were crouching behind bushes and great stones, and on the Native Contingent which led the attack, under Commandant Browne.

The latter had their own armament of assegais and shields, to which the Government added Martini-Henrys or Enfields, but their fighting-dress consisted of their own bare skins. Each company generally was formed of a separate tribe, under its own chief, with a nominal allowance of three British officers; but there were none of minor rank, to lead sections, or so forth, as these natives could not comprehend divided authority. They were pretty well drilled, and many were skilled marksmen; but now many fell so fast under the fire of the Zulus that every effort of their white officers was requisite to get the others on.



Dying or dead, with the red blood oozing from their bullet-wounds, rolling about and shrieking in agony, or lying still and lifeless, they studded all the rocky ascent, while the survivors gradually worked their way upward, planting in their fire wherever a dark head or limb appeared ; and when they came within a short distance of the enemy's position, the men of the 24th prepared to carry it by a rush.

Hammersley's handsome face glowed under his white helmet, and his dark eyes sparkled as he formed his company for attack on the march.

‘ From the right—four paces extend !’

Then the skirmishers swung away out at a steady double.

Florian was now for the first time under fire. He heard the ping of the rifle-bullets as they whistled past him from the smoke-hidden position of the Zulus, and he heard the splash of the lead as they starred the rocks close by. Then came that tightening of the chest and increase of the pulse which the chance of sudden death or a deadly wound inspire, till after a time that emotion passed away, and in its place came the genuine British bull-dog longing to grapple with the foe.

The Zulus fired briskly and resolutely from their rocky eyries ; and while one party made a valiant stand at a cattle-kraal, another nearly made the troops quail and recoil by hurling down huge boulders, which they dislodged by powerful levers, and sent thundering and crashing from the summit of the hill till it was captured by the bayonets of the 24th ; they were put to flight in half an hour, and by nine in the morning the whole affair was over, and Florian found he had come unscathed through his baptism of fire : but Lieutenant Sheldrake had his shoulder-arm lacerated by a launched assegai when leading the left half-company.

Sirayo's kraal, which lay farther up the Bashee Valley, was burned later in the day by mounted men under Colonel Baker Russell. Our losses were only fourteen ; those of the Zulus were great, including the capture of a thousand cattle and sheep. All the women and children captured were sent back to their kraals, by order of Lord Chelmsford, who, on the 17th

of January, rode out to the fatal hill of Isandhlwana, which he selected as the next halting-place of the centre column, and which was eventually to prove well-nigh its grave.

---

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE CAMP.

ON the 20th of January the column began its march for the hill of Isandhlwana, through a country open and treeless.

‘Where and how is Dulcie now?’ was the ever-recurring thought of Florian as he tramped on in heavy marching order in rear of Hammersley’s company. Oh, to be rich and free—rich enough, at least, to save her from that cold world upon which she was cast, and in which she must now be so lonely and desolate.

But he was a soldier now, and serving face to face with death in a distant and savage land, and, so far as she was concerned, hope was nearly dead.

‘My position seems a strangely involved one!’ thought Florian, when he brooded over the changed positions of himself and Shafto; ‘there is some mystery in it which has not yet been unravelled. Am I to be kept in this state of doubt and ignorance all my life?—but that may be a short period as matters go now. *My father!* Must I never more call or consider him I deemed to be so, by that name again?’

Four companies of the 24th Regiment were left at Rorke’s Drift when Colonel Glyn’s column reached Isandhlwana, which means the Lion’s Hill. Precipitous and abrupt to the westward, on the eastward it slopes down to the watercourse, and grassy spurs and ridges rise from it in every direction. The waggon-track to Rorke’s Drift passes over its western ridge, and groups of lesser hills, covered with masses of loose grey stones, rise in succession like waves of a sea in the direction of the stream called the Buffalo.

When the column reached the hill and began to pitch their tents, the young soldiers of the 'new system' were sorely worn and weary—'pumped out,' as they phrased it. 'We may laugh at the old stiff stock and pipeclay school,' says a popular military writer, 'but it may be no laughing matter some day to find out that, together with the stock and pipeclay which could easily be spared, we have sacrificed the old *solidity*, which army reformers should have grappled to their souls with hooks of steel,' and painfully was that want of hardihood and foresight shown in the tragedy that was acted on the hill of Isandhlwana.

A long ridge, green and grassy, ran southward of the camp, and overlooked an extensive valley. Facing this ridge, and on the extreme left of the camp, were pitched the tents of the Natal Native Contingent. A space of three hundred yards intervened between this force and the next two regiments.

The British Infantry occupied the centre, and a little above their tents were those of Lord Chelmsford and the head-quarter staff. The mounted infantry and the artillery were on the right, lining the verge of the waggon-track—road it could scarcely be called. The camp was therefore on a species of sloping plateau, overlooked by the crest of the hill, which rose in its rear, sheer as a wall of rock. The waggons of each corps were parked in its rear.

The camp looked lively and picturesque on the slope of the great green hill, the white tents in formal rows, with the red coats flitting in and out, and the smoke of fires ascending here and there, as the men proceeded to cook their rations.

Florian was detailed for out-picquet duty that night, for the Zulus were reported to be in force in the vicinity, and no one on that duty could close an eye or snatch a minute's repose. The circle of the outposts from the centre of the camp extended two thousand five hundred yards by day, lessened to one thousand four hundred by night, though the mounted videttes were further forward of course; but, by a most extraordinary oversight, no breastworks or other barriers were formed to protect the camp.



Before coming to the personal adventures of our friends in this story, we are compelled for a little space to follow that of the war.

Early on the morning of the following day, the mounted infantry and police, under Major Dartnell, proceeded to reconnoitre the mountainous ground in the direction of a fastness in the rocks known as Matyano's stronghold, while the Natal force, under Lonsdale, moved round the southern base of the Malakota Hill to examine the great dongas it overlooked.

Dartnell's party halted and bivouacked at some distance from the camp, to which he sent a note stating that he had a clear view over all the hills to the eastward, and the Zulus were clustering there in such numbers that he dared not attack them unless reinforced by three companies of the 24th next morning.

A force to aid him left the camp accordingly at daybreak, in light marching order, without knapsacks, great-coats, or blankets, with one day's cooked provisions and seventy rounds per man; and with it went Lord Chelmsford.

These three detached parties so weakened the main body in camp that it consisted then of only thirty mounted infantry for videttes, eighty mounted volunteers and police, seventy men of the Royal Artillery, six companies of the 24th, including Hammersley's, and two of the Natal Native Contingent.

When these reconnoitring parties were far distant from Isandhlwana, the Zulus in sight of them were seen to be falling back, apparently retiring on what was afterwards found most fatally to be a skilfully preconceived plan; and, prior to making a general attack upon them, Lord Chelmsford and his staff made a halt for breakfast.

It was at that crisis that a messenger—no other than Sergeant Florian MacIan—came from the camp mounted, with tidings that the enemy were in sight on the left, and that the handful of mounted men had gone forth against them.

On this Lord Chelmsford ordered the Native Contingent to return at once to the hill of Isandhlwana.

Soon after shots were briskly exchanged with the enemy in

front ; a vast number were 'knocked over,' and some taken prisoners. One of the latter admitted to the staff, when questioned, that his King Cetewayo expected a large muster that day—some twenty-five thousand men at least.

It was noon now, and a suspicion that something might be wrong in the half-empty camp occurred to Lord Chelmsford and his staff, and this suspicion was confirmed, when the distant but deep hoarse boom of heavy guns came hurtling through the hot atmosphere.

'Do you hear that?' was the cry on all hands ; 'there is fighting going on at the camp—we are attacked in the rear !'

Then a horseman came galloping down from a lofty hill with the startling tidings that he could see the flashing of the cannon at the hill of Isandhlwana, and that it was enveloped on every side by smoke !

To the crest of that hill Lord Chelmsford and his staff galloped in hot haste, and turned their field-glasses in the direction of the distant camp ; but if there had been smoke it had drifted away, and all seemed quiet and still. The rows of white bell-tents shone brightly in the clear sunshine, and no signs of conflict were visible. Many men were seen moving among the tents, but they were supposed to be British soldiers.

This was at two in the afternoon, and the suspicion of any fatality—least of all the awful one that had occurred—was dismissed from the minds of the staff and Lord Chelmsford, who did not turn his horse's head towards the camp till a quarter to three, according to the narrative of Captain Lucas of the Cape Rifles.

When, with Colonel Glyn's detachment, he had marched within four miles of it, he came upon the Native Contingent halted in confusion, indecision, and something very like dismay, and their bewilderment infected the party of the General, towards whom, half an hour after, a single horseman came up at full speed.

He was Commandant Lonsdale, the gallant leader of the Natal Contingent, who had gone so close to the camp that he had been fired on by what he thought were our own troops, but

proved to be Zulus in the red tunics of the slain, the same figures whom the staff from the distant hill had seen through their field-glasses moving among the snow-white tents.

Out of one of them he saw a Zulu come with a blood-dripping assegai in his hand. He then wheeled round his horse, and, escaping a shower of rifle-bullets, galloped on to warn Lord Chelmsford of the terrible trap into which he was about to fall. The first words he uttered were, 'My Lord, the camp is in possession of the enemy!'

Of the troops he had left there that morning nothing now remained but the dead, and that was nearly all of them.

The silence of death was there! And now we must note what had occurred in the absence of the General, of Colonel Glyn, and the main body of the second column.

---

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE MASSACRE AT ISANDHLWANA.

'WHAT the deuce is up?' cried Hammersley and other officers, as they came rushing out of their tents when the sound of firing was heard all along the crest of the hill on the left of the camp, as had been reported to Lord Chelmsford; and, soon after, the few Mounted Infantry under Colonel Durnford were seen falling back, pursued swiftly by Zulus, who, like a dark human wave, came rolling in thousands over the grim crest of the hill, throwing out dense clouds of skirmishers, whose close but desultory fire fringed all their front with smoke.

There was no occasion for drum to be beaten or bugle blown to summon the troops; in a moment all rushed to arms, and the companies were formed and 'told off' in hot and nervous haste.

The Zulus came on in very regular masses, eight deep, main-



taining a steady fire till within assegai distance, when they ceased firing, and launched with aim unerring their deadly darts.

Our troops responded by a close and searching fire, under which the black-skinned savages fell in heaps, but their places were fearlessly taken by others.

The rocket battery had been captured by them in their swift advance, and every man of it perished in a moment with Colonel Russell.

Driven back by their furious rush and force, the cavalry gave way, and Captain Mostyn, with two companies of the noble 24th, was despatched at the double to the eastern neck of the hill of Isandhlwana, where the Zulus in vast force were pressing along to outflank the camp, and on this wing of theirs he at once opened a disastrous fire.

Near the Royal Artillery guns the other two companies of the 24th were extended in skirmishing order; this was about half-past twelve p.m., and, as the mighty semicircle—the horns of the Zulu army—closed on them, every officer and man felt that they were fighting for bare existence now, and only procrastinating the moment of extirpation.

The shock which Hammersley's heart had received by the supposed deception of Finella was still too terribly fresh to render him otherwise than desperate and reckless of life, and in the coming *mêlée* he fought like a tiger.

He longed to forget both it and her—to put death itself, as he had now put distance, between himself and the place where that cruel blow had descended upon him; thus he exposed himself with a temerity that astonished Sheldrake, Florian, and others.

D'Aquilar Pope's company of the 24th was thrown forward in extended order near the waggon-track till his left touched the files of the right near the Artillery. Facing the north were the companies of Mostyn, Cavaye, and Hammersley, with two of the Native Contingent, all in extended order, and over them the guns threw shot and shell eastward. But all the alternative companies were without supports to feed the

fighting line, unless we refer to some of the Native Contingent held as a kind of reserve.

The crest of that precipitous mountain in front of which our luckless troops were fighting with equal discipline and courage in the silent hush of desperation, is more than 4,500 feet high ; but the camp upon its eastern slope had been in no way prepared, as we have said, for defence by earthworks or otherwise.

‘The tents,’ we are told, ‘were all standing, just as they had been left when the troops under Chelmsford and Glyn marched out that morning, and their occupants were chiefly officers’ servants, bandsmen, clerks, and other non-combatants, who, until they were attacked, were unconscious of danger. Fifty waggons, which were to have gone back to the commissariat camp at Rorke’s Drift, about six miles in the rear as the crow flies, had been drawn up the evening before in their lines on the neck between the track and the hill, and were still packed in the same position. All other waggons were in rear of the corps to which they were attached. The oxen having been collected for safety when the Zulus first came in sight, many of them were regularly yoked in.’

It was not until after one o’clock that our handful of gallant fellows on the slope of the hill fully realised the enormous strength of the advancing army, now ascertained to have been *fourteen thousand men*, under Dabulamanzi.

By that time the Zulus had fought to within two hundred yards of the Natal Contingent, which broke and fled, thus leaving a gap in the fighting line, and through that gap the Zulus—loading the air with a tempest of triumphant yells and shrieks—burst like a living sea, and in an instant all became hopeless confusion.

‘Form company square,’ cried Hammersley, brandishing his sword ; ‘fours deep, on the centre—close.’

But there was no time to close in or form rallying-squares, and never again would our poor lads ‘re-form company.’

Before Mostyn and Cavaye’s companies could close, or even fix their bayonets, they were destroyed to a man, shot

down, assegaid, and disembowelled, while the shrieks and fiend-like yells of the Zulus began to grow louder as the rattle of the musketry grew less, and the swift game of death went on.

Hammersley's company, which had been on the extreme left, though unable to form square, succeeded in reaching, but in a shattered condition, a kind of terrace on the southern face of the hill, from whence, as the smoke cleared away, they could see the Zulus using their short, stabbing assegais with awful effect upon all they overtook below.

Under the fire of the cannon, which had been throwing case-shot, the Zulus fell in groups rather than singly, and went down by hundreds; but as fast as their advance files melted away, hordes of fresh savages came pouring up exultingly from the rear to feed the awful harvest of death; and, as they closed in, 'Limber up!' was the cry of Major Smith, the Artillery commanding officer; but the limber gunners failed to reach their seats, and, save a sergeant and eight, all perished under the assegai; and while in the act of spiking a gun, the Major was slain amid an awful *mêlée* and scene of carnage, where horse and foot, white man and black savage, were all struggling and fighting in a dense and maddened mass around the cannon-wheels.

Notwithstanding the manner in which he exposed himself, Hammersley, up to this time, found himself untouched; but his subaltern, poor Vincent Sheldrake, whose wounded sword-arm rendered him very helpless, was bleeding from several stabs and two bullet-wounds, which it was impossible to dress, yet he strove to save his servant Tom, who was lying in his last agony, and who, in gratitude, strove to accord him a military salute, and died in the attempt.

'Poor Vincent! you are covered with wounds!' said Hammersley.

'Ay; so many that my own mother—God bless her!—wouldn't know me; so many that if I was stripped of these bloody rags you would think I was tattooed. It is no crutch and toothpick business this!' replied Sheldrake, with a grim faint smile, as from weakness he fell forwards on his hands and



knees, and Florian stood over him with bayonet fixed and rifle at the charge.

At that moment an assegai flung by a Zulu finished the mortal career of Sheldrake. But Florian shot the former through the head, and the savage—a sable giant—made a kind of wild leap in the air, and fell back on a gashed pile of the dead and the dying. It was Florian's last cartridge, and his rifle-barrel was hot from continued firing by this time.

All was over now !

Every man who could escape strove to make his way to the Buffalo River, but that proved impossible even for mounted men. Intersected by deep watercourses, encumbered by enormous boulders of granite, the ground was of such a nature that the fleet-footed Zulus, whose bare feet were as hard as horses' hoofs, alone could traverse it, and the river, itself swift, deep, and unfordable, had banks almost everywhere jagged by rocks sharp and steep.

A few reached the stream, among them Vivian Hammersley, his heart swollen with rage and grief by the awful result of that bloody and disastrous day, by the destruction of his beloved regiment—the old 24th—for which he could not foresee the other destruction that 'the Wolseley Ring' would bring upon it and the entire British Army, and the loss by cruel deaths of all his brother-officers—the entire jolly mess-table. In that time of supreme agony of heart, we believe he almost forgot his quarrel with Finella Melfort, but found the track to Helpmakaar and Rorke's Drift, where a company of the 24th were posted under the gallant young Bromhead ; but most of the fugitives were entirely ignorant of the district through which they wildly sought to make their escape, and were thus easily overtaken and slain by the Zulus ; and so hot was the pursuit of these poor creatures, that even of those who strove to gain a point on the Buffalo, four miles from Isandhlwana, none but horsemen reached the river, and of these many were shot or drowned in attempting to cross it.

Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Pulleine of the 24th, on perceiving

all lost, and that the open camp was completely in the hands of the savages, called to Lieutenant Melville, and said :

‘ As senior lieutenant, you will take the colours, which must be saved at all risks, and make the best of your way from here !’

He shook warmly the hand of young Melville, who, as adjutant, was mounted, and then exclaimed to the few survivors :

‘ Men of the old 24th, here we are, and here we must fight it out !’

Then his gallant ‘ Warwickshires’ threw themselves in a circle round him, and perished where they stood.

Melville galloped off with the colours, escorted by Lieutenant Coghill of the same corps, and by Florian, who was ordered to do so, as colour-sergeant, and who, luckily for himself, had found a strong horse. These three fugitives were closely pursued, and with great difficulty kept together till they reached the Buffalo River, the bank of which was speedily lined with Zulu pursuers armed with rifle and assegai.

Melville’s horse was shot dead in the whirling stream, and the green silk colours, heavy with gold-embroidered honours, slipped from his hands. Coghill, a brave young Irish officer, reached the Natal side untouched and in perfect safety ; but on seeing his Scottish comrade clinging to a rock while seeking vainly to recover the lost colours, he went back to his assistance, and his horse was then shot, as was also that of Florian, who failed to get his right foot out of the stirrup, and was swept away with the dead animal down the stream.

The Zulus now continued a heavy fire, particularly on Melville, whose scarlet patrol jacket rendered him fatally conspicuous among the greenery by the river-side at that place. Two great boulders, six feet apart, lie there, and between them he and Coghill took their last stand, and fought, sword in hand, till overwhelmed. ‘ Here,’ says Captain Parr in his narrative, ‘ we found them lying side by side, and buried them on the spot’—truly brothers in arms, in glory and in death.

When all but drowned, Florian succeeded in disentangling his foot from the stirrup-iron, and struck out for the Natal side. A shrill yell from the other bank announced that he was not unseen ; bullets ploughed the water into tiny white spouts about him, and many a long reedy dart was launched at him—but with prayer in his heart and prayer on his lips he struggled on, and reached the bank, where he lay still, worn breathless, incapable of further exertion, and weakened by his recent fall in the donga, after escaping from Elandsbergen ; thus believing that all was over with him, the Zulus ceased firing, and went in search of congenial carnage elsewhere. And there, dying to all appearance, in a reedy swamp by the Buffalo River, the tall grass around him, bristling with launched assegais, lay Florian Melfort, the true heir of Fettercairn, friendless and alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

No Briton survived in camp to see the complete end of the awful scene that was acted there ! And of that scene no actual record exists. For a brief period—a very brief one—a hand-to-hand fight went on among, and even in, the tents, and the company of Captain Reginald Younghusband of the 24th alone appears to have made any organized resistance. Making a wild rally on a plateau below the crest of the hill, they fought till their last cartridges were expended, and then died, man by man, on the ground where they stood. The Zulus surged round and over them with tiger-like activity, frantic gestures, remorseless ferocity, and lust of blood, whirling and flinging their ponderous knobkerries, or war-clubs, one blow from which would suffice to brain a bullock.

Even the savage warriors who slew and mutilated them were filled with admiration at their courage, while tossing their own dead again and again on the bayonet-blades to bear down the hedge of steel. ‘Ah, those red soldiers at Isandhlwana !’ said the Zulus after ; ‘how few they were, and how they fought ! They fell like stones—each man in his place.’

There is something pathetic in the description of the stand made by the *last man* (poor Bob Edgehill, of the 24th), as given in the *Natal Times*.



Keeping his face to the foe, he struggled towards the crest of the hill overlooking the camp, till he reached a small cavern in the rocks. Therein he crept, and with rifle and bayonet kept the Zulus at bay, while they, taking advantage of the cover some rocks and boulders afforded them, endeavoured by threes and fours to shoot him.

Bob—that racketsy Warwickshire lad—was very wary. He did not fire hurriedly, but shot them down in succession, taking a steady and deliberate aim. At last his only remaining cartridge was dropped into the breech-block of his rifle; another Zulu fell, and then he was slain. This was about five in the evening, when the shadow of the hill of Isandhlwana was falling far eastward across the valley towards the ridge of Isipesi.

‘We ransacked the camp,’ said a Zulu prisoner afterwards, and took away everything we could find. We broke up the ammunition-boxes and took all the cartridges. We practised a great deal at our kraals with the rifles and ammunition. Lots of us had the same sort of rifle that the soldiers used, having bought them in our own country, but some who did not know how to use it had to be shown by those who did.’

Five entire companies of the 1st battalion of the 24th perished there, with ninety men of the 2nd battalion; 832 officers and men mutilated and disembowelled, in most instances stripped, lay there dead, shot in every position, amid gashed and gory horses, mules, and oxen, while 1400 oxen and £60,000 of commissariat supplies were carried off.

At ten minutes past six in the evening of that most fatal day Lord Chelmsford was joined by Colonel Glyn’s force. A kind of column was formed, with the guns in the centre, with the companies of the 2nd battalion of the 24th on each flank, and when the sun had set, and its last light was lingering redly on the rocky scalp of Isandhlwana, this force was within two miles of the camp, where now alone the dead lay. The opaque outline of the adjacent hills was visible, with the dark figures of the Zulus pouring in thousands over them in the direction of Ulundi; and after shelling the neck of the Isandhlwana Hill—

where it would seem none of the enemy were, for no response was made—the shattered force, crestfallen in spirit, heavy in heart, and after having marched thirty miles, and been without food for forty-eight hours, bivouacked among the corpses of their comrades.

When, five months after, the burial parties were sent to this awful place, great difficulty was experienced in finding the bodies, the tropical grass had grown so high, while the stench from the slaughtered horses and oxen was overpowering. Every conceivable article, with papers, letters, and photographs of the loved and the distant, were thickly strewn about. 'A strange and terrible calm seemed to reign in this solitude of death and nature. Grass had grown luxuriantly about the waggons, sprouting from the seed that had dropped from the loads, falling on soil fertilised by the blood of the gallant fallen. The skeletons of some rattled at the touch. In one place lay a body with a bayonet thrust to the socket between the jaws, transfixing the head a foot into the ground. Another lay under a waggon, covered by a tarpaulin, as if the wounded man had gone to sleep while his life-blood ebbed away. In one spot over fifty bodies were found, including those of three officers, and close by another group of about seventy; and, considering that they had been exposed for five months, they were in a singular state of preservation.'

Such is the miserable story of Isandhlwana.

---

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### HAS SHE DISCOVERED ANYTHING?

FINELLA MELFORT knew by the medium of telegrams and despatches in the public prints—all read in nervous haste, with her heart sorely agitated—that Hammersley had escaped the Isandhlwana slaughter, and was one of the few who had reached a place of safety. So did Shafto, but with no emotion of satisfaction, it may be believed.



When the latter returned to Craigengowan, Lady Fettercairn had not the least suspicion of the bitter animosity with which Finella viewed him, and of course nothing of the episode in the shrubbery, and thus was surprised when her granddaughter announced a sudden intention of visiting Lady Drumshoddy, as if to avoid Shafto, but delayed doing so.

At his approach she recoiled from him, not even touching his proffered hand. All the girlish friendship she once had for this newly discovered cousin had passed away now, crushed out by a contempt for his recent conduct, so that it was impossible for her to meet him or greet him upon their former terms. She feared that her loathing and hostility might be revealed in every tone and gesture, and did not wish that Lord or Lady Fettercairn should discover this.

To avoid his now odious society—odious because of the unexplainable quarrel he had achieved between herself and the now absent Vivian—she would probably have quitted Craigengowan permanently, and taken up her residence with her maternal relation at Drumshoddy Lodge; but she preferred the more refined society of Lady Fettercairn, and did not affect that of the widow of the ex-Advocate and Indian Civilian, who was vulgarly bent on urging the interests of Shafto, and would have derided those of Hammersley in terms undeniably coarse had she discovered them. And Lady Drumshoddy, though hard by nature as gun-metal, was a wonderful woman in one way. She could back her arguments by the production of tears at any time. She knew not herself where they came from, but she could ‘pump’ them up whenever she had occasion to taunt her granddaughter with what she termed contumacy and perverseness of spirit.

On the day Shafto returned Finella was in the drawing-room alone. She was posed in a listless attitude. Her slender hands lay idly in her lap; her face had grown thin and grave in expression, to the anxiety and surprise of her relatives. Her chair was drawn close to the window, and she was gazing, with unseen eyes apparently, on the wintry landscape, where the lawn and the leafless trees were powdered with snow, and



a red-breasted robin, with heart full of hope, was trilling his song on a naked branch.

It was a cheerless prospect to a cheerless heart. She had drawn from her portemonnaie (wherein she always kept it) the bitter little farewell note of Hammersley, and after perusing it once more, returned it slowly to its place of concealment.

Where was he then? How employed—marching or fighting, in peril, or in safety? Did he think of her often, and with anger? Would he ever come back to her, and afford a chance of explanation and reconciliation? Ah no! it was more than probable their paths in life would never cross each other again.

Tears welled in her eyes as she went over in memory some episodes of the past. She saw again his eager eyes and handsome face so near her own, heard his tender and pleading voice in her ear, and recalled the touch of his lips and the clasp of his firm white hand.

Another hand touched her shoulder, and she recoiled with a shudder on seeing Shafto.

‘What is this I hear,’ said he; ‘that you think of leaving Craigengowan?’

‘Yes,’ she replied, curtly.

‘Because I have returned, I presume?’

‘Yes.’

His countenance darkened as he asked:

‘But—why so?’

‘Because I loathe that the same roof should be over you and me. Think of what your infamous cunning has caused!’

‘A separation,’ said he, laughing malevolently, ‘a quarrel between that fellow and you?’

‘Yes,’ she replied with flashing eyes.

‘Can nothing soften this hostility towards me?’ he asked after a pause.

‘Nothing. I never wish to see your face or hear your voice again.’

‘Well, if you leave Craigengowan simply to avoid me, I

shall certainly tell your grandmother the reason ; and how will you like that ?

‘ You will ? ’

‘ By Heaven, I will ! That he and you alike resented my regard for you ! ’

To say that Shafto loved Finella, with all her beauty, would be what a writer calls a ‘ blasphemy on the master-passion ’ ; but he admired her immensely, longed for her, and more particularly for her money, as a protection—a barrier against future and unseen contingencies.

At his threat Finella grew pale with anticipated annoyance and mortification ; but in pure dread of Shafto’s malevolence, and for the other reasons given, she did not hasten her preparations for departure, and ere long the arrival of a new guest at Craigengowan decided her on remaining, for this guest was one for whom she conceived a sudden and lasting affection, and with whom she found ties and sympathies in common.

After being out most part of a day riding, Shafto returned in the evening, and, throwing his horse’s bridle to a groom, was ascending the staircase to his own room, when, framed as it were in the archway of a corridor, he saw, to his utter bewilderment, the face and figure of Dulcie Carlyon !

His voice failed him, and with parted lips and dilated eyes she gazed at him in equal amazement, too, but she was the first to speak.

‘ Shafto,’ she exclaimed, ‘ you here—*you* ? ’

‘ Yes,’ he snapped ; ‘ what is there strange in that ? This is my grandfather’s house.’

‘ Your grandfather’s house ? ’ she repeated, and then the details of the situation came partly before her. She lifted up her eyes, wet with tears like dewy violets—for his voice, if hard and harsh, was associated with her home and Revelstoke ; but she shrank from him, and her lips grew white on finding herself so suddenly face to face with one whom she felt intuitively was a kind of evil genius in her life !

Dulcie just then seemed a delightful object to the eye. That pure waxen skin, which always accompanies red-golden hair,

was set off to the utmost advantage by the dead black of her deep mourning, and her plump white arms and slender hands were coquettishly set off by long black lace gloves ; for Dulcie was dressed for dinner, and her soft white neck shone like satin in contrast to a single row of jet beads, her only other ornament being Florian's locket, on which the startled eyes of Shafto instantly fell.

Dulcie saw this, and instinctively she placed her hand—a slim and ringless little white hand—upon it, as if to protect it, and gather strength from its touch ; but her bosom now heaved at the sight of Shafto, and fear and indignation grew there together, for she was losing her habitual sense of self-control.

‘ You—here ? ’ he said again inquiringly.

‘ Yes,’ she replied in a broken voice, ‘ and I wonder if I am the same girl I was a year ago, when poor papa was well and living, and I had dear Florian—to love me ! ’

‘ Dulcie *here*—d—nation ! ’ thought Shafto : ‘ first old Madelon Galbraith and now Dulcie ; by Jove, the plot is thickening—the links may be closing ! ’

He had an awful fear and presentiment of discovery ; thus perspiration stood like bead-drops on his brow ; yet the mystery of her presence was very simple.

Poor Mrs. Prim could stand no longer the cold treatment and the ‘ whim-whams,’ as she called them, of Lady Fettercairn ; she had gone away, and it was known at Craigengowan that a substitute—a more pleasing one, in the person of a young English girl—was coming as companion, through the instrumentality of the Rev. Mr. Pentreath.

Shafto had been absent in Edinburgh when this arrangement was made. Lady Fettercairn had thought the matter too petty, too trivial, to mention in any of her letters to her ‘ grandson’ ; Dulcie knew not where Shafto was, and thus the poor girl had come unwittingly to Craigengowan, and into the very jaws of that artful schemer !

Few at the first glance might have recognised in Dulcie the bright, brilliant little girl whom Florian loved and Shafto had



insulted by his so-called passion. The character of her face, and perhaps of herself, was somewhat changed since her affectionate father's death and Florian's departure to Africa in a position so humble and hopeless. The bright hair which used to ripple in a most becoming and curly fringe over her pretty white forehead, had to be abandoned for braiding, as Lady Fettercairn did not approve of a 'dependant' dressing her hair in what she deemed a fast fashion, though sanctioned by Royalty; and now it was simply shed back over each shell-like ear without a ripple if possible, but Dulcie's hair always would ripple somehow.

'Shafto,' said Dulcie, in a tone of deep reproach, 'what have you done with Florian? But I need not ask.'

'By the locket you wear, you must have seen or heard from him since he and I parted,' replied Shafto, with the coolest effrontery; 'so what has he done with himself?'

'I should ask that of you.'

'Of me!'

'Yes—why is he not here?'

'Why the deuce should he be *here*?' was the rough response.

'He is your cousin, is he not?'

'Yes; we are full cousins certainly,' admitted Shafto with charming frankness.

'Nothing more?'

'What the devil more should we be?' asked Shafto, coarsely, annoyed by her questions.

'Friends—you were almost brothers once—in the dear old Major's time.'

'We are not enemies; he chose some way to fortune, I suppose, when Fate gave me mine.'

'And you know not where he is?'

'No.'

'Nor what he has done with himself?'

'No—no—I tell you no!' exclaimed Shafto, maddened with annoyance at these persistent questions and her tearful interest in her lover.

‘Poor Florian!’ said the girl, sadly and sweetly, ‘he has become a soldier, and is now in Zululand.’

Shafto certainly started at this intelligence.

‘In Zululand,’ he chuckled; ‘*he* too there! Well, beggars can’t be choosers, so he chose to take the Queen’s shilling.’

‘Oh, Shafto, how hard-hearted you are!’ exclaimed Dulcie, restraining her tears with difficulty.

‘Am I? So he has left you—gone away—become a soldier; well, I don’t think that a paying kind of business. Why bother about him?’

‘Why—Shafto?’

‘It will be strange if you do so long.’

‘Wherefore?’

‘Because, to my mind, a woman is seldom faithful, unless it suits her purpose to be so; and in this instance it won’t suit yours.’

Dulcie’s eyes sparkled with anger, though they were eyes that, fringed by the longest lashes, looked at one usually sweetly, candidly, with an innocent and fearless expression. Her bosom heaved, as she said:

‘Florian will gain a name for himself, I am sure; and if he dies——’ Her voice broke.

‘If not in the field it will be where England’s heroes usually die.’

‘Where?’

‘In the workhouse,’ was the mocking response of Shafto; and he thought, ‘If he is killed by a Zulu assegai, or any other way, to prevent exposure or public gossip, the game will still lie in my hands.’

In the public prints Dulcie had of course seen details of the episode of Lieutenants Melville and Coghill, and their attempts to save that fatal colour, which was afterwards found in the Buffalo, and decorated with immortelles by the Queen at Osborne; the papers also added that the colour-sergeant who accompanied them was missing, and that his body had not been found.

*Missing!*

As no name had yet been given, Dulcie was yet mercifully ignorant of what that appalling word contained for her !

‘Already you appear to be quite at home here in Craigen-gowan,’ said Shafto, after an awkward pause.

‘I *am* at home,’ replied Dulcie, simply ; ‘and hope this may be the happiest I have had since papa died.’

(But she doubted that, with Shafto as an inmate.)

‘I am glad to hear it ; but you don’t mean to treat me—an old friend—as you have done ?’

‘Friend !’ she exclaimed, and laughed a little bitter laugh, that sounded strange from lips so fresh, so young and rosy.

‘You have not yet accepted my hand.’

‘Nor ever shall, Shafto Gyle,’ said she defiantly, and still withholding hers.

‘Melfort !’ said he menacingly.

‘I knew and shall always know you as Shafto Gyle.’

It was not quite a random speech this, but it stung the hearer. He crimsoned with fury, and thought—‘She is as vindictive as Finella. Has she discovered *anything about me* ?’

‘Shafto, do you know that the dressing-bell was rung some time since ?’ said Lady Fettercairn with the same asperity, as she appeared in the corridor.

Both started. How long had she been there, and what had she overheard ? was in the mind of each.

---

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### FEARS AND SUSPICIONS.

‘WELL, Dulcie,’ said Shafto, who, full of his own fears, contrived to confront her alone before the dinner, which was always a late one at Craigen-gowan, ‘won’t you even smile—now that we are for a little time apart—for old acquaintance’ sake ?’

‘How can I smile, feeling as I do—and knowing what I do ?’



'What do you know?' he asked huskily, and changing colour at this new and stinging remark.

'That poor Florian is facing such perils in South Africa,' she replied in a low voice.

'Pooh! is that all?' said Shafto, greatly relieved; 'he'll get on, as well as he can expect, no doubt.'

'Amid all the wealth that surrounds you, could you not have done something for him?' asked the girl, wistfully and reproachfully.

'Poor relations are a deuced bother, and here they dislike his name somehow.'

As his fears passed away Shafto's aspect became menacing, and knowing her helplessness and her dependent position in the house to which he was the heir, for a moment or two the girl's spirit failed her.

'Well, what do you mean to say now?' he asked abruptly.

'About whom?' she asked softly and wonderingly.

'Me!'

'I shall say nothing, Shafto—nothing to injure you at least—with reference to old times.'

'What the devil could you say that would injure me in the eyes of my own family?'

Dulcie thought of the locket stolen from her so roughly, of his subsequent villainy therewith, and of his tampering with her long and passionate letter to Florian, but remained judiciously silent, while striving to look at him with defiant haughtiness.

'I am speaking to you, Dulcie; will you have the politeness to attend to me?'

'To what end and purpose?'

She eyed him with chilling steadiness now, though her heart was full of fear; but his shifty grey eyes quailed under the cold gaze he challenged, and thought how closely her bearing and her words resembled those of Finella.

'You don't like me, Dulcie,' said he with a bitter smile; 'that is pretty evident.'

'No, I simply hate you!' said she, losing all control over herself.

‘You are charmingly frank, Miss Carlyon, but hate is a game that two can play at ; so beware, I say, *beware!* I must hold the winning cards.’

‘Oh, how brave and generous you are to threaten and torture a poor, weak girl whom you call an old friend, and under your own roof!’

‘And the dear dove of Florian—Florian the private soldier!’ he sneered fiercely.

‘How horrible, how cruel!’ she wailed, and covered her eyes with her hands.

‘Never mind,’ he resumed banteringly, ‘you have got back your locket again.’

‘I wonder how you dare to refer to it!’ she exclaimed, and for a moment the angry gleam of her eyes was replaced by a soft, dreamy smile, as she recalled the time and place when Florian clasped the locket round her neck, when the bells of Revelstoke Church were heard on the same breeze that wafted around them the perfumes of the sweetbriar and wild apple blossoms in the old quarry near the sea, which was their trysting-place. How happy they were then, and how bright the future even in its utter vacuity, when seen through the rosy medium of young love!

Shafto divined her thoughts, for he said with jealous anger:

‘You used the term dare with reference to your precious locket?’

‘Yes; the locket of which you, Shafto Gyle, deprived me with coarse violence, like—like——’

‘Well, what?’

‘The garotters who are whipped in prison!’

His face grew very dark; then he said:

‘We may as well have a truce to this sort of thing. A quarrel between you and me, Dulcie Carlyon, would only do me no harm, but you very much. The grandmater wouldn’t keep you in the house an hour.’

‘How chivalrous, how gentlemanly, you are!’

‘Hush!’ said he, with alarm, for at that instant the dinner-bell was clanging, and Finella with others came into the drawing-

room, Lady Fettercairn luckily the last, though Shafto had warily withdrawn abruptly from Dulcie's vicinity at the first sound of it.

Her first dinner in the stately dining-room of Craigengowan, with its lofty arched recess, where stood the massive sideboard arrayed with ancient plate, its hangings and full-length pictures, was a new experience—a kind of dream to Dulcie. The lively hum of many well-bred voices in easy conversation ; the great epergne with its pyramid of fruit, flowers, ferns, and feathery grasses ; the servants in livery, who were gliding noiselessly about, and seemed to be perpetually presenting silver dishes at her left elbow ; old Mr. Grapeston, the solemn butler, presiding over the entire arrangements—all seemed part of a dream, from which she would waken to find herself in her old room at home, and see the waves rolling round the bleak promontory of Revelstoke Church and in the estuary of the Yealm ; and, sooth to say, though used to all this luxury now, and though far from imaginative, Shafto had not been without some fears at first that he too might waken from a dream, to find himself once more perched on a tall stool in Lawyer Carlyon's gloomy office, and hard at work over an ink-spotted desk, the memory of which he loathed with a disgust indescribable.

Seeing that Dulcie looked sad and abstracted, Finella, who kindly offered a seat beside her, said softly and sweetly :

'I hope you won't feel strange among us ; but I see you are full of thought. Did you leave many dear friends behind you—at home, I mean ?'

'Many ; oh yes—all the village, in fact,' said Dulcie, recalling the sad day of her departure ; 'but, perhaps, I was selfish enough to regret one most—my pet.'

'What was it ?'

'A dear little canary—only a bird.'

'And why didn't you bring it ?'

'People said that a great lady like Lady Fettercairn would not permit one like me to have pets, and so—and so I gave him to our curate, dear old Mr. Pentreath. Oh, how the bird sang as I was leaving him !'



‘Poor Miss Carlyon?’ said Finella, touched by the girl’s sweet and childlike simplicity.

For a moment—but a moment only—Dulcie was struck by the painful contrast between her own fate and position in life, and those of the brilliant Finella Melfort, and with it came a keen sense of inequality and injustice; but Finella, fortunately for herself, was an heiress of money, and not—as Lord Fettercairn often reminded her—an unlucky landed proprietor, in these days of starving crofters, failing tenants, Irish assassinations, and agricultural collapses, with defiant notices of impossibility to pay rent, and clamours for reduction thereof. She was heiress to nothing of that sort, but solid gold shaken from the Rupee Tree.

When the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room, Dulcie gladly accompanied them, instead of retiring (as perhaps Lady Fettercairn expected) to her own apartment; we say gladly, as she was as much afraid of the society of Shafto as he was of hers—and she had a great dread she scarcely knew of what.

How, if this cold, stately, and aristocratic lady, to whom she now owed her bread, and whose paid dependant she was, should discover that Shafto, the recovered ‘grandson,’ had ever made love to her once upon a time in her Devonshire home?

Dulcie, as it was her first experience of Craigengowan, did not sink into her position there, by withdrawing first, and, more than all, silently. She effusively shook hands with everyone in a kindly country fashion, but withdrew her slender fingers from Shafto’s eager clasp with a haughty movement that Lady Fettercairn detected, and with some surprise and some anger, too; but to which she did not give immediate vent.

‘Her hair is unpleasantly red,’ said she to Finella after a time.

‘Nay, grandmamma,’ replied the latter; ‘I should call it golden—and what a lovely skin she has!’

‘Red I say her hair is; and she looks ill.’

‘Well, even if it is, she couldn’t help her hair, unless she dyed it; besides, she is in mourning for her father, poor thing, and has had a long, long journey. No one looks well after that—and she travelled third-class, she told me, poor girl.’

‘How shocking ! Don’t speak of it.’

Dulcie had indeed done so. Her exchequer was a limited one ; and farewell gifts to some of her dear old people had reduced it to a minimum.

‘She seems rather a Devonshire hoyden,’ said Lady Fettercairn, slowly fanning herself ; ‘but I hope she will be able to make herself useful to me.’

‘Grandmamma, I quite adore her !’ exclaimed the impulsive Finella ; ‘we shall be capital friends, I am sure.’

‘But you must never forget who she is.’

‘An orphan—or a lawyer’s daughter, do you mean ?’

‘No.’

‘What then ?’

‘My paid companion,’ said Lady Fettercairn icily ; but Finella was not to be repressed, and exclaimed :

‘I am sure that she is, by nature, a very jolly girl.’

‘Don’t use such a phrase, Finella ; it is positive slang.’

‘It expresses a great deal anyway, grandmamma,’ said Finella, who was somewhat of an enthusiast ; and added, ‘There is something very pathetic at times in her dark blue eyes—something that seems almost to look beyond this world.’

‘What an absurd idea !’

‘She has evidently undergone great sorrow, poor thing !’

‘All these folks who go out as companions and governesses, and so forth, have undergone all that sort of thing, if you believe them ; but they must forget their sorrows, be lively, and make themselves useful. What else are they paid for ?’

Lady Fettercairn had been quite aware at one time that Shafto had been in the employment of a Mr. Carlyon in Devonshire, and Dulcie wondered that no questions were asked her on the subject ; but doubtless the distasteful idea had passed from the aristocratic mind of the matron, and Shafto (save to Dulcie in private) had no desire to revive Devonshire memories, so *he* never referred to it either.

Dulcie, her grief partially over and her fear of Shafto nearly so, revelled at first in the freedom and beauty of her surroundings. Craigengowan House (or Castle, as it was sometimes

called, from its turrets and whilom moat) was situated, she saw, among some of the most beautiful mountain scenery of the Mearns; and, as she had spent all her life (save when at school) in Devonshire, the lovely and fertile surface of which can only be described as being billowy to a Scottish eye, she took in the sense of a complete change with wonder, and regarded the vast shadowy mountains with a little awe.

In the first few weeks after her arrival at Craigengowan she had plenty of occupation, but of a kind that only pleased her to a certain extent.

She had Lady Fettercairn's correspondence to attend to; her numerous invitations to issue and respond to; her lap-dog to wash with scented soaps—but Dulcie always doted dearly on pets; and she had to play and sing to order, and comprehensively to make herself 'useful'; yet she had the delight of Finella's companionship, friendship, and—she was certain—regard. But she was imaginative and excitable; and when night came, and she found herself alone in one of the panelled rooms near the old Scoto-French turrets, with their vanes creaking overhead, and she had to listen to the boisterous Scottish gales that swept through the bleak and leafless woods and howled about the old house, as a warning that winter had not yet departed, poor little English Dulcie felt eerie, and sobbed on her pillow for the dead and the absent; for the days that would return no more; for her parents lying at Revelstoke, and Florian—who was she knew not where!

---

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### BY THE BUFFALO RIVER.

THE morning of a new day was well in when Florian, lying among the tall, wavy reeds and feathery grass by the river-bank, awoke from a sleep that had been deep and heavy, induced by long exhaustion, toil, and over-tension of the nerves. Ere he started up, and as he was drifting back to consciousness, his



thoughts had been, not of the awful slaughter from which he had escaped, but, strange to say, of Dulcie Carlyon, the object of his constant and most painful solicitude.

His returning thoughts had been of the past and her. In fancy he saw her again, with her laughing dark blue eyes and her winning smile ; he felt the pressure of her little hand, and heard the tones of her voice, so soft and winning, and saw her, not as he saw her last, in deep mourning, but in her favourite blue serge trimmed with white, and a smart sailor's hat girt with a blue yachting ribbon above her ruddy golden hair ; then there came an ominous flapping of heavy wings, and he started up, to find two enormous Kaffir vultures wheeling overhead in circles around him !

On every side reigned profound silence, broken only by the lap-lapping of the Buffalo as it washed against rocks and boulders on its downward passage to the Indian Ocean. A few miles distant rose the rocky crest of fatal Isandhlwana, reddened to the colour of blood by the rising sun, and standing up clearly defined in outline against a sky of the deepest blue ; and a shudder came over him as he looked at it, and thought of all that had happened, and of those who were lying unburied there.

His sodden uniform was almost dried now by the heat of the sun, but he felt stiff and sore in every joint, and on rising from the earth he knew not which way to turn. He knew that two companies of the first battalion of his regiment were at Helpmakaar, with the regimental colour, and that one of the second battalion was posted at Rorke's Drift, under Lieutenant Bromhead, but of where these places lay he had not the least idea. He was defenceless too, for though he had his sword-bayonet, he had lost his rifle when his horse was shot in the stream.

He passed a hand across his brow as if to clear away his painful and anxious thoughts, and was making up his mind to follow the course of the river upward, as being the most likely mode of reaching Rorke's Drift, when a yell pierced his ears, and he found himself surrounded by some twenty black-skinned

Zulus, with gleaming eyes and glistening teeth, all adorned with cow-tails, feathers, and armlets, and armed in their usual fashion—Zulus who had been resting close by him among the long reeds, weary, as it proved, after their night's conflict at Rorke's Drift and their repulse at that place.

Florian's blood ran cold !

Already he seemed to feel their keen assegais piercing his body and quivering in his flesh. However, to his astonishment, these savages, acting under the orders of their leader, did nothing worse than strip him of his belts and tunic, and, strange enough, examined him to see if he was wounded anywhere.

He then understood their leader to say—for he had picked up a few words of their not unmusical language—that they would give him as a present to Cetewayo.

Their leader proved to be one of the sons of Sirayo—one of the original causes of the war, and has been described as a model Zulu warrior, lithe, muscular, and without an ounce of superfluous flesh on his handsome limbs ; one who could launch an assegai with unerring aim, and spring like a tiger to close quarters with knife or knobkerie—the same warrior who lay long a prisoner in the gaol of Pietermaritzburg after the war was over.

They dragged Florian across the river at a kind of ford, and partly took him back the way he had come from Isandhlwana ; and awful were the sights he saw upon it—the dead bodies of comrades, all frightfully gashed and mutilated, with here and there a wounded horse, which, after partially recovering from its first agony, was cropping, or had cropped, the grass around in a limited circle, which showed the weakness caused by loss of blood ; and Florian, with a prayerful heart, marvelled that his savage captors had spared *him*, as they assegaid these helpless animals in pure wantonness and lust of cruelty.

All day they travelled Florian knew not in what direction, and when they found him sinking with exertion they gave him a kind of cake made of mealies to eat, and a draught of *utywala* from a gourd. This is Kaffir beer, or some beverage which is

like thin gruel, but on which the army of Cetewayo contrived to get intoxicated on the night before the battle of Ulundi.

Early next day he was taken to a military kraal, situated in a solid and pastoral plain, surrounded by grassy hills, where he was given to understand he would be brought before the king.

Like all other military kraals it consisted of some hundred beehive-shaped huts, surrounded by a strong wooded palisade, nine feet high and two feet thick. He was thrust into a hut, and for a time left to his own reflections.

The edifice was of wicker-work made of wattles, light and straight, bent over at regular distances till they met at the apex, on the principle of a Gothic groined arch. The walls were plastered, the roof neatly thatched; the floor was hard and smooth. Across it ran a ledge, which served as a cupboard, where all the clay utensils were placed, and among these were squat-shaped jars capable of holding twenty gallons of Kaffir beer.

Ox-hide shields and bundles of assegais were hung on the walls, which were thin enough to suggest the idea of breaking through them to escape; but that idea no sooner occurred to the unfortunate prisoner than he abandoned it. He remembered the massive palisade, and knew that within and without were Zulu warriors in thousands, for the kraal was the quarters of an Impi, or entire column.

After a time he was brought before Cetewayo, who was seated in a kind of chair at the door of a larger hut than the rest, with a number of indunas (or colonels) about him, all naked save at the loins, wearing fillets or circlets on their shaven heads, and armed with rifles; and now, sooth to say, as he eyed this savage potentate wistfully and with dread anxiety, Florian Melfort thought not unnaturally that he was face to face with a death that might be sudden or one of acute and protracted torture.

There is no need for describing the appearance of the sable monarch, with whose face and burly figure the London photographers have made all so familiar; but on this occasion, though he was nude, all save a royal mantle over his shoulders—a



mantle said to have borne 'a suspicious resemblance to an old tablecloth with fringed edges'—he wore his other 'royal' insignia, which these artists perhaps never saw—a kind of conical helmet or head-dress, with a sort of floating puggaree behind, and garnished by three feathers—not like the modern badge of the Prince of Wales, but like three old regimental hackles, one on the top and one on each side.

Near him Florian saw a white man, clad like a Boer, whom he supposed to be another unfortunate prisoner like himself, but who proved to be that strange character known as 'Cetewayo's Dutchman,' who was there to act as interpreter.

This personage, whose name was Cornelius Viljoen, had been a Natal trader, and acted as a kind of secretary to the Zulu king throughout the war; but latterly he was treated with suspicion, and remained as a prisoner in his hands, and now he was ordered to ask Florian a series of questions.

'Can you unspike the two pieces of cannon captured by the warriors of Dabulamanza at Isandhlwana?'

These were seven-pounder Royal Artillery guns.

'I cannot,' replied Florian.

'Why?'

'Because I am not a gunner—neither am I a mechanic,' he replied, unwilling to perform this task for the service of the enemy.

'The king desires me to tell you that if you can do this, and teach his young men the way to handle these guns, he will give you a hundred head of oxen, a kraal by the Pongola River, where your people will never find you, and you will ever after be a great man among the Zulus.'

Again Florian protested his inability, assuring them that he knew nothing of artillery.

When questioned as to the strength of the three columns that entered Zululand, the king and all his indunas seemed incredulous as to their extreme weakness when compared to the vast forces they were to encounter; and when told that there were hundreds of thousands of red soldiers who could come from beyond the sea, they laughed aloud with unbelief, and

Cetewayo said the more that came the more there would be to kill, and that when he had driven the last of the British and the last of the Boers into the salt sea together, he would divide all their lands among his warriors.

Cetewayo waved his hand, as much as to say the interview was over, and said something in a menacing tone to Cornelius Viljoen.

‘You had better consider the king’s wish,’ said the latter to Florian ; ‘he tells me that if you do not obey him in the matter of the guns, you will be cut in small pieces with an assegai, joint by joint, beginning with the toes and finger-tips, so that you may be long, long of dying, and pray for death.’

For three successive days he was visited by the Dutchman, who repeated the king’s request and threat, and, in pity perhaps for his youth, the speaker besought him to comply ; but Florian was resolute.

Each day at noon the latter was escorted by two tall and powerful Zulus, one armed with a musket loaded, and the other with a double-barbed assegai, into the adjacent mealie fields, where, to sustain life, he was permitted with his hands unbound to make a plentiful repast on this hermit-like diet ; and it was while thus engaged he began to see and consider that this was his only chance of escape, if he could do so, by preventing the explosion of the musket borne by one of his guards from rousing all the warriors in and about the kraal.

Florian was quite aware now of the reason *why* Methlagazulu (for so the son of Sirayo was named) had so singularly spared his life, when captured beside the Buffalo River, and he knew now that if he failed to obey the request of Cetewayo in the matter of unspiking the two seven-pounders, or wore out the patience of that sable potentate, he would be put to a cruel death ; and he shrewdly suspected, from all he knew of the Zulu character, that even were he weak enough, or traitor enough, to do what he was requested, he would be put to death no doubt all the same, despite the promised kraal and herd of cattle beyond the Pongola River.

He had seen too much of ruthless slaughter of late not to be

able to nerve himself—to screw his courage up to the performance of a desperate deed to secure his own deliverance and safety.

His two escorts were quite off their guard, while he affected to be feeding himself with the green mealies, and no more dreamt that he would attack them empty-handed or unarmed than take a flight into the air.

Suddenly snatching the assegai from the Zulu, who, unsuspecting him, held it loosely, he plunged it with all his strength—a strength that was doubled by the desperation of the moment—into the heart of the other, who was armed with the rifle—a Martini-Henry taken at Isandhlwana—and leaving it quivering in his broad, brawny, and naked breast, he seized the firearm as the dying man fell, and wrenched away his cartridge-belt.

The whole thing was done quick as thought, and the other Zulu, finding himself disarmed, fled yelling towards the kraal, about a mile distant, while Florian, his heart beating wildly, his head in a whirl, rushed with all his speed towards a wood—his first impulse—for shelter and concealment.

In the lives of most people there are some episodes they care not to recall or to remember, but this, though a desperate one, was not one of these to Florian.

He had the start of a mile in case of pursuit, which was certain ; but he knew that a mile was but little advantage when his pursuers were fleet and hard-footed Zulus.

Whatever the reason, the pursuit of him was not so immediate as he anticipated ; but he had barely gained the shelter of the thicket, which, with a great undergrowth or jungle, was chiefly composed of yellow wood and assegai trees, when, on giving a backward glance, he saw the black-skinned Zulus issuing in hundreds from the gates in the palisading, and spreading all over the intervening veldt.

Would he, or could he, escape so many ?

A few shots that were fired at him by some of the leading pursuers showed that he was not unseen ; but, as the Zulus knew not how to sight their rifles or judge of distance, their



bullets either flew high in the air or entered the ground some sixty yards or so from their feet; and Florian, knowing that they would be sure to enter the wood at the point where he disappeared in it, turned off at an angle, and creeping for some distance among the underwood to conceal, if possible, his trail, which they would be sure to follow, he reached a tree, the foliage of which was dense. He slung his rifle over his back, and climbed up for concealment, and then for the first time he became aware that his hands, limbs, and even his face, were lacerated, torn, and bleeding from the leaves and thorns of the sharp, spiky plants among which he had been creeping.\*

He had scarcely attained a perch where he hoped to remain unseen till nightfall, or the Zulus withdrew, and where he sat, scarcely daring to breathe, when the wood resounded with their yells.

---

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### ON THE KARROO.

HEEDLESS of the spikes and brambles of the star-shaped carrion-flower and other Euphorbia, prickly cacti, and so forth, as if their bare legs were clothed in mail, the Zulus rushed hither and thither about the wood in their fierce and active search, and, as they never doubted they would find the fugitive, they became somewhat perplexed when he was nowhere to be seen; and after traversing it again and again, they dispersed in pursuit over the open country, and then Florian began to breathe more freely.

He had lost his white helmet in the Buffalo, and been since deprived of his scarlet tunic; thus, fortunately for himself, his

---

\* The escape of Florian from the kraal is an incident similar, in some instances, to that of Private Grandier, of Weatherly's Horse, after the affair at Inhlobane.

attire consisted chiefly of a pair of tattered regimental trousers and a blue flannel shirt, and these favoured his concealment among the dense foliage of the tree.

Night came on, but he dared not yet quit the wood, lest the searchers might be about; and he dared not sleep lest he might fall to the ground, break a limb perhaps, and lie there to perish miserably.

When all was perfectly still, and the bright stars were shining out, he thought of quitting his place of concealment; but a strange sound that he heard, as of some heavy body being dragged through the underwood, and another that seemed like mastication or chewing, made him pause in alarm and great irresolution.

Florian thought that night would never pass; its hours seemed interminable. At last dawn began to redden the east, and he knew that his every hope must lie in the opposite direction; and, stiff and sore, he dropped a fresh cartridge into the breech-block of his recently acquired rifle, and then slid to the ground and looked cautiously about him.

Then the mysterious sounds he had heard in the night were fearfully accounted for, and his heart seemed to stand still when, not twenty paces from him, he saw a lion of considerable size, and he knew that more than one horse of the King's Dragoon Guards had been devoured by such animals in that country.

Florian had never seen one before, even in a menagerie; and, expecting immediate death, he regarded it with a species of horrible fascination, while his right hand trembled on the lock of his rifle; for as a serpent fascinates a bird, so did the glare of that lion's eye paralyze Florian for a time.

The African lion is much larger than the Asiatic, and is more powerful, its limbs being a complete congeries of sinews. This terrible animal manifested no signs of hostility, but regarded Florian lazily, as he lay among the bushes near a half-devoured quagga, on which his hunger had been satiated. His jaws, half open, showed his terrific fangs. Florian knew that if he fired he might only wound, not slay the animal, and, with consider-

able presence of mind he passed quickly and silently out of the wood into the open, and at that supreme crisis forgetting even all about the Zulus, but giving many a backward nervous glance.

It has been remarked in the Cape Colony that a change has come over the habits of the lion on the borders of civilization. In the interior, where he roams free and unmolested, his loud roar is heard at nightfall and in the early dawn reverberating among the hills; but where guns are in use and traders' waggon-wheels are heard—perhaps the distant shriek of a railway engine—he seems to have learned the lesson that his own safety, and even his chances of food, lie in silence.

Over a grassy country, tufted here and there by mimosa-trees and prickly *Euphorbia* bushes, Florian, without other food than the green mealies of which he had had a repast on the previous day, marched manfully on westward, in the hope of somewhere striking on the Buffalo River, and getting on the border of Natal, for there alone would he be in safety. But he had barely proceeded four miles or so, when he came suddenly upon three Zulus driving some cattle along a grassy hollow, and a united shout escaped them as they perceived him. Two were armed with rifles, and one carried a sheaf of assegais.

The two former began to handle their rifles, which were muzzle-loaders; but, quick as lightning, Florian dropped on his right knee, planting on the left his left elbow, and sighting his rifle at seven hundred yards, in good Hythe fashion, knocked over the first, and then the second ere he could reload; for both had fired at him, but as they were no doubt ignorant of the use of the back-sight, their shot had gone he knew not where.

One was killed outright: the other was rolling about in agony, beating the earth with his hands, and tearing up tufts of grass in his futile efforts to stand upright.

The third, with the assegais, instead of possessing himself of the fallen men's arms and ammunition to continue the combat, terrified perhaps to see both shot down so rapidly, and at such



a great distance, fled with the speed of a hare in the direction of that hornets' nest, the military kraal.

To permit him to escape and reach that place in safety would only, Florian knew, too probably destroy his chances of reaching the frontier, so he took from his knee a quiet pot-shot at the savage, who fell prone on his face, and with a quickened pace Florian continued his progress westward.

Compunction he had none. He only thought of his own desperate and lonely condition, of those who had perished at Isandhlwana, of poor Bob Edgehill and his song—

‘Merrily, lads, so ho !’

the chorus of which he had led when the ‘trooper’ came steaming out of Plymouth harbour.

He had now to traverse miles of a genuine South African *karroo*, a dreary, listless, and uniform plain, broken here and there by straggling *kopjies*, or small hills of schistus or slate, the colour of which was a dull ferruginous brown. No trace of animal nature was there—not even the Kaffir vulture; and the withered remains of the fig-marigold and other succulent plants scattered over the solitary waste crackled under his feet as he trod wearily on.

Night was closing again, when, weary and footsore, he began to feel a necessity for rest and sleep, and on reaching a little donga, through which flowed a stream where some indigo and cotton bushes were growing wild, he was thankful to find among them some melons and beans. Of these he ate sparingly; then, laying his loaded rifle beside him, he crept into a place where the shrubs grew thickest, and fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

Laden with moisture, the mild air of the African night seemed to kiss his now hollow cheeks and lull his senses into soft repose.

Next day betimes he set out again, unseen by any human eye, and after traversing the *karroo* (far across which his shadow was thrown before him by the rising sun) for a few more miles, a cry of joy escaped him when he came suddenly

upon a bend of the Buffalo River, and knew that the opposite bank was British territory.

Slinging his rifle, he boldly swam across, and had not proceeded three miles when he struck upon a kind of beaten path that ran north and south ; but, as a writer says, 'the worst by-way leading to a Cornish mine, the steepest ascent in the Cumberland hills which draught horses would never be faced at, is a right-royal Queen's highway compared with a Natal road.'

Great was his new joy when, after a time spent in some indecision, he saw a strange-looking vehicle approaching at a slow pace, though drawn by six Cape horses. This proved to be Her Majesty's post-cart proceeding from Greytown to Dundee, *viâ* Helpmakaar, the very point for which the escaped prisoner was making his way.

It overtook him after a time, and he got a seat in it among four or five men like Boers, who, however, proved to be Englishmen. It was a wretched conveyance, without springs, and covered with strips of old canvas, patched in fifty places, and fastened down by nails. No luggage is allowed for passengers in these post-carts, which carry the mail-bags alone.

A naked Kaffir running on foot, armed with a whip, cut away indefatigably at the two leaders ; another on the box plied a long jambok or team-whip of raw ox-thong, urging the animals on the while in his own guttural language, and only used English when compelled to have recourse to abuse ; and after ten miles' progress along a road—if it could be called so—encumbered by boulders in some places, deep with mud in others, Florian found himself in the village of Helpmakaar, and among the tents of the few survivors of the two battalions of the 24th Regiment.

Then he heard for the first time of the valiant defence of Rorke's Drift by Bromhead and Chard, with only one hundred and thirty men of all ranks against four thousand Zulus, all flushed with the slaughter at Isandhlwana.

He was told how the gallant few in that sequestered post beside the Buffalo River—merely a loop-holed store-house a parapet of biscuit-boxes, and a thatched hospital, wherein

thirty-five sick men lay—fought with steady valour for hours throughout that terrible night, resisting every attempt made by the wild thousands to storm it, and without other light than the red flashes of the musketry that streaked the gloom; how the hospital roof took fire, and how six noble privates defended like heroes the doorway with their bayonets (till most of the sick were brought forth), each winning the Victoria Cross; how no less than six times the Zulus, over piles of their own dead, got inside the wretched barricades, and six times were hurled back by our soldiers with the queen of weapons, which none can wield like them—the bayonet.

‘Thank God that some of the dear old 24th are left, after all!’ was the exclamation of Florian, when among their tents he heard this heroic story, and related his own desperate adventures to a circle of bronzed and eager listeners.

For the first time after several days he saw his face in a mirror, and was startled by the wild and haggard aspect of it and the glare in his dark eyes.

‘Surely,’ thought he, ‘I am not the same fellow of the dear old days at Revelstoke—not the lad whom Dulcie remembers—this stern, wild-eyed man, who looks actually old for his years’; but he had gone through and faced much, hourly, of danger, suffering, and probable death. Could he be the same lad whom she loved and still loves, and with whom she fished and boated on the Erme and Yealm, and gathered berries in the Plymstock woods and the old quarries by the sea?

How often of late had he lived a *lifetime in a minute*?

There were sweet and sad past memories, future hopes, strange doubts, retrospections, and present sufferings all condensed again and again into that brief space, with strange recollections of his youth—his dead parents, the old home, the cottage near Revelstoke, Dulcie, Shafto, and old nurse Madelon—a host of confused thoughts, and ever and always ‘the strong vitality of youth rebelling against possible death’—for death is always close in war.

But it was not death that Florian feared, but—like the duellists in ‘The Tramp Abroad’—*mutilation*.



## CHAPTER XXX.

## FLORIAN JOINS THE MOUNTED INFANTRY.

VINCENT HAMMERSLEY, as we have said, achieved, with a few others, his escape to the Natal side of the Buffalo River, and reached the village of Helpmakaar, situated about five miles therefrom, where two companies of the first battalion of his unfortunate regiment were posted, under the command of a field-officer, and where for a few days he found himself in comparative comfort, though he and his brother-officers had a crushing sense of sorrow and mortification for what had befallen their corps at Isandhlwana ; for regiments were not then what they have become now, mere scratch battalions, without much cohesion in peace or war, but were happy, movable homes—one family, indeed—full of *camaraderie*, grand traditions, and old *esprit de corps* ; and often at Helpmakaar was the surmise, which is ever in the minds of our soldiers at the scene of war, put in words, ‘What will they think of this at home? What are folks in Britain saying about this?’

Hearing of Florian’s arrival, kindly he sent for him to congratulate him on his escape, and the interview took place in what was termed the ‘mess-tent’ (an old tarpaulin stretched on poles), where, seeing his worn and wasted aspect, he insisted on his taking some refreshment before relating what he and several officers were anxious to hear—details of the gallant but fatal episode of Melville and Coghill, when they perished on the left bank of the Buffalo. They then heard his subsequent adventures and the story of his narrow escape.

‘I should like to have seen you potting those three fellows on the open karroo,’ said an officer.

‘It was a mercy to me that they knew not how to sight their rifles, sir, or I should not have been here to-day, probably,’ replied Florian modestly.

‘By Jove!’ said Hammersley, ‘I can’t think enough of your

act in the mealie-field, polishing off the Zulu who had the rifle with the assegai of his companion, and so becoming master of the situation. There were courage and decision in the act—two valuable impulses; for indecision and weakness of character are at the bottom of half the failures of life. You can't go about thus, in your shirt-sleeves,' added Hammersley. 'I have an old guard-tunic in my baggage; it will be good enough to fight in, and is at your service.'

'Thanks, sir,' replied Florian, colouring; 'but how can I appear in an officer's tunic?'

'One may wear anything here,' said Hammersley, laughing. 'By Jove! you are sure to be an officer some day soon; but meantime you may rip off the badges.'

Florian was glad of the gift, as all the stores of every description had been captured at Isandhlwana.

Hammersley had seriously begun the apparently hopeless task of rooting Finella's image out of his heart.

'Flirts and coquettes,' he would think, 'I have met by dozens in society; but I could little have thought that the childlike, apparently straightforward and impulsive Finella would form such a deuced combination of both characters! And, not content by bestowing an engagement ring, I actually gave her—ass that I was!—a wedding one. Yet I am not sure that I would not do all the same folly over again. "Unstable as water—thou shalt not excel." So we have it in Genesis.'

A hundred times he asked of himself, how could she lure him into loving her and then deceive him so, and for such a cub as Shafto?—the bright, childlike, outspoken girl. The act seemed to belie her honest, fearless, and beautiful eyes—for honest, fearless, and sweet they were indeed. Oh! it was all like a bad dream, that sudden episode in the garden at Craigen-gowan. How much of that game had been going on before and since? This thought, when it occurred to him, seemed to turn his heart to stone or steel.

Hammersley was now, by his own request, appointed to the Mounted Infantry. His casual remark about the tunic had fired the sparks of ambition in Florian's heart; thus he

might run great risks, face more peril, and thus win more honour.

He volunteered to join the same force, and was placed in Hammersley's troop, which was to form a part of the column to relieve Colonel Pearson's force, then isolated and blockaded by the Zulus at a place called Etschowe, where he had skilfully turned an old Norwegian mission-station into a fort.

Nearly on the summit of the Tyoe Mountains, more than two thousand feet in height, it stood amid a district of wonderful sylvan beauty. An open and hilly country lay on the south, bounded by the vast ranges of the Umkukusi Mountains; on the north the Umtalazi River rolled in blue and silver tints through the green and grassy karroo. On the westward lay the Hintza forest of dark primeval wood, and far away, nearly forty miles to the eastward, could be seen Port Durnford or the shore of the Indian Ocean.

But there the Colonel, whose force consisted chiefly of a battalion of his own regiment, the 3rd Buffs, six companies of the Lanarkshire, a naval brigade, some cavalry and artillery, found himself undergoing all the inconvenience of a blockade, with provisions and stores decreasing fast; and of twelve messengers, whom he had sent to Lord Chelmsford asking instructions and succour, eleven had been slain on the way, so there was nothing for it but to fight to the last, and defend the fort till help came, or share the fate of those who fell at Isandhlwana.

Fort Tenedos (so called from Her Majesty's ship of that name) was thirty miles distant from Etschowe, and formed the base from which Lord Chelmsford went to succour the latter place at the head of nearly 7000 men of all arms.

Hammersley's little troop was with the vanguard of the leading division, which was composed of a strong naval brigade, with two Gatlings, or 'barrel-organs,' as the sailors called them, 900 Argyleshire Highlanders, 580 of the Lanarkshire and Buffs, 350 Mounted Infantry, and a local contingent; and another column, similarly constituted, under Colonel Pemberton of the 60th Rifles.



'I am glad to have you on this duty with me,' said Hammersley, as the Mounted Infantry rode off in the dark hours of the morning, 'to feel the way,' *en route* to the Tugela River.

'I thank you, sir,' replied Florian; 'and am proud to be still under your orders. I only wish that Mr. Sheldrake were with us too.'

'Poor Sheldrake is lying yet unburied with all the rest!'

'With what solicitude,' thought Hammersley, smiling in the dark, 'he used to caress his almost invisible moustache! This Mounted Infantry service is rather desperate work,' he said aloud. 'Why did you volunteer for it?'

'To win honour and rank, if I can. But you, sir?'

'To forget—if possible—to forget!' was the somewhat enigmatical reply of Hammersley. Then, after a long pause, he said, somewhat irrelevantly, 'My instinct told me from the first that you are a gentleman, though a sergeant in my company.'

'Yes, I am a gentleman,' replied Florian; 'I have passed through a school of adversity to you unknown, Captain Hammersley.'

'Sorry to hear it—poor fellow.'

'And yet, sir, if I may venture to make the remark, from some things I have heard you say, you seem to be at warfare with the world.'

'In one sense, at least, I am embittered against it,' said Hammersley, and urged, he knew not by what emotion, unless that impulse which inspires men at times to make strange confidences, he added, 'I have learned the truth of what an author says, "that a woman can smile in a man's face and breathe vows of fidelity in his ear, each one of which is black as her own heart." This is the reason I volunteered for this rough work. Have you learned that too?'

'No, sir, thank Heaven!'

'As yet you are lucky; some day you may be undeceived.'

The noise made by the convoy, two miles and a half long, descending towards the river, could now be heard in the rear. It consisted of 113 waggons, each drawn by twelve oxen; fifty strongly wheeled Scottish carts; and about fifty mules all laden.

Every man carried in his spare and extensive pouches 200 rounds of ball-cartridge.

As the sun rose, the appearance of the long column, with the convoy, descending towards the river, and leaving the forests behind, was impressive and imposing. Brightness, colour, sound, and action, all were there.

Like a river of shining steel, the keen bayonets seemed to flash and ripple in the sunshine; the red coats and white helmets came out in strong relief against the back-ground of green; the pipes of the Highlanders, and the drums and fifes of the other corps, loaded the calm, moist, morning air with sounds, in which others blended—the neighing of chargers, the lowing of the team-oxen, the rumble and clatter of many wheels, the yells and other unearthly cries of the Kaffir drivers.

Rain had fallen heavily of late; and the Tugela, at the point at which the column crossed, was six hundred yards in breadth. The Mounted Infantry were first over, and rode in extended order—scouting—each man with his loaded rifle planted by the butt on his right thigh. Florian was mounted on a horse which he named Tattoo—as it was a grey having many dark spots and curious stripes—a nag he soon learned to love as a great pet indeed. The country around was open; thus, with the sharp activity of the scouting force on one hand, and the partial absence of wood or scrub on the other, the Zulus had few or no opportunities for surprise or ambush, and the relieving column had achieved half the distance to be traversed before any great difficulties occurred.

Each night, on halting, an entrenched camp or laager was formed, with a shelter built twenty yards distant outside, and the strictest silence was enjoined after the last bugles had sounded. On the march the column was joined by the 57th ‘Regiment,’ the ‘Old Die Hards’ of Peninsular fame, whom they received with hearty cheers.

Some Zulus in their simple war array were visible on the 1st of April; and during the night many red signal-fires were seen to flash up on the hills to the north, thus indicating the gathering of a great force, and these continued to blaze, though the

rain fell heavily, wetting every man in the laager to the skin, as the column was without tents.

It was a night of anxiety, gloom, and suffering. In fitful gleams, between masses of black and flying cloud, the weird, white moon shone out at times; but no sound reached the alert advanced sentinels, save the melancholy howl of the jackal or the hoarse croak of the Kaffir vulture expectant of its coming feast.

The trumpets sounded at dawn on the 2nd of April. The Mounted Infantry sprang into their saddles and galloped forth to reconnoitre, while the troops unplied and stood to their arms, though no one knew where the wily and stealthy Zulus were. Captain Percy Barrow, of the 19th Hussars, had reconnoitred on the previous day eight miles to the north-east, as far as Wamoquendo, and could see nothing of them, and on the morning Hammersley with his troop had ridden as far in a westerly direction with the same success, and yet ere the day closed the desperate battle of Ginghilovo was fought

---

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### DULCIE'S NEW FRIEND.

AND how fared it with Dulcie at Craigengowan?

The season was the early days of April; but in the Mearns they are usually more like last days of March, when the Bervie, the Finella River, and their tributaries were hurrying towards the sea in haste, as if they had no time to dally with the pebbles and boulders that impeded them; when the early-yeaned lambs begin to gambol and play, and the cloud and sunshine seem to chase each other over the tender grass; and when violets, as Shakespeare has it, 'sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,' give their fragrance to the passing breeze.

As yet Dulcie knew nothing of what had exactly befallen



Florian, like many others who had deep and thrilling interest in the lists of the sergeants, rank and file.

Like Finella, Shafto knew that Hammersley's name had not appeared in the list of casualties, and he remembered him—jealousy apart—with a bitter hatred; for latterly the former, even before the affair of the cards, had been very cold, and many a time, notwithstanding Shafto's position in the house, used to honour him with only a calm and supercilious stare. Now it has been said truly that there are few things more irritating to one's vanity than to be calmly ignored. 'Argument, disagreement, even insolence, are each in their way easier to bear than that species of lofty indifference intended to convey a sensation of inferiority and of belonging to a lower class of beings altogether. It gives the feeling of there being something *wrong* about you, without your exactly knowing *what*.'

But Shafto felt the falsehood of his position whenever he was with supposed equals, and failed to assume perfect confidence or proper dignity.

Though comfortable enough in her new surroundings, Dulcie was somewhat changed from the winsome and impulsive Dulcie whom we first described in the sailor's hat and blue serge suit at Revelstoke. Though her keener grief had subsided, anxiety about Florian, who had not another creature in the world to love him but herself, and a natural doubt about her own future, had stolen the roundness from her cheeks, and the roseleaf tints too, while her skin in its delicate whiteness had become waxen in aspect, and the coils of her red-golden hair seemed almost too heavy for her shapely head and slender neck. But she was far from idle. She had 'my lady's' lap-dog, a snarling little brute whose teeth filled her with terror, to feed and comb daily; she had much 'lovely china' to dust; a wardrobe to attend to, and rich laces to darn; she had notes innumerable to write; and be always smiling and lively as well as useful when her heart was full of dull pain and despondency concerning the unfortunate Florian, which at night especially put her in a species of fever, and made her turn and toss restlessly on her pillow, and start from sleep with a little cry of terror as she

flung out her arms as if to ward off the frightful thoughts of what might be happening, or had happened already, so far, far away. And all this was the harder to bear because she was then without a friend or confidante with whom she could share the burden of her secret sorrow.

She had been some time at Craigengowan before she discovered in its place of honour the portrait of young Lennard Melfort, which had been so long relegated to a lumber-attic, and its resemblance to 'Major MacIan,' even in his elder years, startled and amazed her; moreover, it was still more wonderful that it so closely resembled Florian, whom all at Revelstoke were astounded to hear was only the Major's nephew, and not his son; while Shafto, she saw, bore no likeness to the picture at all.

She was never weary of looking at it, and asking questions of Finella about Lennard, which that young lady was unable to answer, as that which had happened to him occurred long before she was born.

As for Shafto, he never dared to look at this work of art. Though the portrait of a young man, and his last memory of the Major was that of a prematurely old one, the likeness between the two was marvellous: and its deep thoughtful eyes seemed to follow, to haunt, and to menace him. He loathed it; and though one of the best efforts of Sir Daniel Macnee, the President of the Royal Scottish Academy, he would fain, if he could, have found some plan for its destruction. He avoided, however, as much as possible, the apartment in which it hung.

To his annoyance, one morning, he found Dulcie radiant with joy, and an ugly word hovered on his lips when he discovered the cause thereof.

She had been reading about the march of the relieving column towards Etschowe under Lord Chelmsford, and saw Florian's name mentioned in connection with a brilliant scouting exploit of the Mounted Infantry under Captain Hammersley; and a great happiness thrilled her heart, for now she knew that, up to the date given, he was alive and well, and she

thought of writing to him; but would he ever get the letter?—she knew nothing of the camp postal arrangements, and feared it might be futile to do so. Moreover, she had an irrepressible dread of Lady Fettercairn, whose bearing to her was as cold as that of Finella was kind and warm.

‘Don’t you ever wear flowers in your hair, Miss Carlyon?’ said the latter, as she regarded with honest admiration the glories of Dulcie’s ruddy hair shot with gold.

‘No.’

‘Why?’

‘So few tints go well with my hair: people call it red,’ said Dulcie.

‘People who are your enemies.’

‘I never had an enemy,’ said Dulcie simply.

‘That I can well believe. Then it must be those who are envious of your loveliness,’ added Finella frankly.

‘A pink or crimson rose would never do in my hair, Miss Melfort.’

‘But a white one would,’ said Finella, selecting a creamy white rose from a conservatory vase, and pinning it in Dulcie’s hair, giving it a kindly pat as she did so. ‘Look, grandmamma; doesn’t she look lovely now?’

And the frank and impulsive girl would have kissed poor Dulcie, but for a cold and somewhat discouraging stare she encountered in the eyes of Lady Fettercairn.

‘Somehow, Miss Carlyon,’ she whispered after a time, ‘I don’t get on well with grandmamma. It is my fault, of course: I suppose I am a little wretch!’

The friendship of these—though one was a wealthy heiress and the other but a poor companion—grew rapidly apace: both were too warm-hearted, too affectionate and impulsive by habit, for it to be otherwise, and it enabled them to pass hours together—though young girls, like elder ones, dearly love a little gossip of their own kind—without any sense of embarrassment or weariness; for ere long it came to pass that they shared their mutual confidence; and, as we shall show, Finella came to speak of Vivian Hammersley to Dulcie, and the latter to her of



Florian. But there was something in Dulcie's sweet soft face that made people older than Finella confide to her their troubles and difficulties, for she was quick to sympathise with and to understand all kinds of grief and sorrow.

One evening as they walked together on the terrace, and tossed biscuit to a pair of stately long-necked swans, the white plumage of which gleamed like snow in the setting sun as they swam gently to and fro in an ornamental pond (a portion of the old moat) that lay in front of the house, Dulcie said, with tears of gratitude glittering in her blue eyes :

'You have done me a world of good by your great kindness of heart to me, Finella—oh, I beg your pardon—Miss Melfort, I mean—the name escaped me,' exclaimed Dulcie, covered with confusion.

'Call me always Finella,' said the other emphatically

'Oh, I dare not do so before Lady Fettercairn.'

'Then do so at other times, Dulcie. You talk of doing you good—I do not believe anyone could have the heart to do you harm.'

'Why?'

'You seem so good—so pure, so simple. Oh, I do love you, Dulcie!' she exclaimed, with true girlish effusiveness.

'I thank you very much; and yet we think you Scotch folks are cold and stiff.'

'*We*—who?'

'The English, I mean.'

'They must be like the Arab who had never seen the world, and thought it must be all his father's tent,' said Finella laughing; 'the insular, untravelled English, I mean.'

'Such kindness is delightful to a lonely creature like me. I have fortunately only myself to work for, however.'

'And no one else to think of?'

'Oh—yes—yes,' said the girl sadly and passionately; 'but he is far, far away, and every day seems to make the void in my heart deeper, the ache keener, the silence more hard to bear.'

'Our emotions seem somehow the same,' said Finella, after a pause. Then thinking that she had perhaps admitted too

much, or laid a secret uselessly bare, Dulcie blushed, and thought to change the subject by saying reflectively, 'How many great and pleasant things one might do if they had the chance of doing so; but such chances never come in my way, for every change with me has been for the worse.'

'Not, I hope, in coming to Craigengowan?'

'Oh no; they are painful matters I refer to. First, I lost my dear papa, and was thereby cast on the world penniless. Since then I have lost one who loved me quite as well as papa did.'

'Another?' said Finella inquiringly.

'Yes: but let me not speak of that,' replied Dulcie hastily, and colouring deeply again; so Finella, like a lady, thought to drop the subject, but somehow, with the instinctive curiosity of her sex, unconsciously revived it again, after a time.

Dulcie, however, perhaps forgetting her present position, and remembering chiefly her old acquaintance with Shafto, was mystified. She thought 'the cousins' were free to marry, so why don't they? If engaged, they act strangely to each other—Finella to him especially—thus she said:

'Is there anything between Mr. Shafto and you, Finella?'

'Yes,' replied the latter, growing pale with anger.

'What is it?'

'Hatred on my part!'

'And on his?'

'Pretended love and—and—avarice. He knows I am rich.'

'But why hatred?' asked Dulcie, without surprise.

'That is my secret, Dulcie.'

'I beg your pardon, I have no right to question you. Surely you are one of those people who always get what they wish for.'

'Why?—for riches do not always give happiness.'

'I mean because you are so good and sweet.'

But Finella shook her pretty head sadly as she thought of Vivian Hammersley, and replied:

'Young says, in his "Night Thoughts":'

"Wishing of all employment is the worst!"

and Young was right, perhaps.'

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## GIRLS' CONFIDENCES.

It was a sweet and mild spring morning, and Finella and Dulcie, each with a shawl over her pretty head, were again promenading on the terrace before the mansion. Lady Fettercain was not yet down, and the breakfast-bell had not yet been rung. The trees were already making a show of greenery, with half-developed foliage; the oak was putting out its red buds; the laburnums were clothed in green and gold, and the voice of the cuckoo could be heard in the woods of Craigengowan.

'The cuckoo—listen!' said Dulcie, pausing in her walk.

'His note is, I believe, a call to love,' said Finella softly.

'The male only uses it; and see, yonder he sits on a bare bough.'

'You can wish: one can do so when they hear the cuckoo.'

'And wish, as I often do, in vain,' said Dulcie, with a tone of sadness unconsciously.

'For what?'

'To hear from one who is far, far away from me; the only friend I have in the world.'

'He of whom you spoke some time ago—a brother?'

'I have no brother, nor a relation on this side of the grave, Miss Melfort.'

'Call me Finella,' said the latter, again struck by Dulcie's desolate tone. 'Who is it—a lover?' she added, becoming, of course, deeply interested.

'A lover—yes,' replied Dulcie, with a fond smile. 'The dearest and sweetest fellow in the world!'

'Yet he left you because your papa died and you became penniless?'

'Oh!—no, no; do not say that. Do not think so hardly of Florian!'

'Florian!—what a funny, delightful name; just like one in a novel!' exclaimed Finella. 'So he is called Florian?'



‘He, too, was poor. He could not marry me, and probably never can do so.’

‘How sad!’ said Finella, with genuine sympathy, though from her own experience she could not quite understand poverty.

‘Florian—my poor Florian!’ said Dulcie, quite borne away by this new sympathy, as she covered her face with her white and tremulous hands, and tried to force back her tears, while Finella kissed, caressed, and tried most sweetly to console her.

‘See!’ said Dulcie, after a pause, opening her silver locket.

‘Oh, what a handsome young fellow!’ exclaimed Finella.

‘Are you engaged?’

‘Hopelessly so.’

‘Hopelessly?’

‘I have said we are too poor to marry.’

‘I don’t understand this,’ said Finella, greatly perplexed: ‘won’t he become rich in time?’

‘Never: he is a soldier, fighting in Africa.’

‘A soldier!’ said Finella, becoming more deeply interested; ‘not an officer?’

‘His father or uncle was,’ replied Dulcie, confusedly. ‘Poverty drove him into the ranks.’

‘Of what regiment?’

‘The 24th Warwickshire.’

Finella changed colour, and her breath seemed to be taken from her, when she heard the name of Hammersley’s corps; and thus, after a time, a great gush of confidence took possession of both girls.

‘I am rich,’ said Finella; ‘I will buy him back to you—I will, I will. Do not weep, dearest Dulcie. The memory of a past that has been happy is always sweet; is it not?’

‘Yes, even if the present be sad.’

‘I do believe, Dulcie, that tears agree with you.’

‘Why?’

‘Because they make those blue eyes of yours positively lovely.’

Dulcie for a moment felt pleasure. Florian had said the same thing once before, and she only half believed him; but to have it endorsed by such a girl as Finella made it valuable indeed to her.

'And Florian—I am quite *au fait* with his name,' said Finella; 'he is a gentleman?'

'Oh, yes—yes!' exclaimed Dulcie, impetuously.

'Poor fellow! Then am I to understand that there is a kind of undefined engagement between you?'

'Something of that kind,' answered Dulcie, simply. 'We knew we might have to wait for each other for years, if, indeed, we ever meet again. We never spoke of marriage quite. How could we, hopeless and poor as we were?'

'But you spoke of love, surely?' said Finella, softly and archly.

'Of love for each other—oh, yes; many, many times.'

'Well, Dulcie, I shall purchase Florian's discharge, as I have said. This kind of thing can't go on,' said Finella, decidedly, unaware that neither officer nor soldier can quit the service when face to face with an enemy, or at the actual seat of war.

Finella was in the act of closing Dulcie's silver locket, when a voice said:

'Please to let me look at this, Miss Carlyon. I have remarked your invariable ornament.'

The speaker was Lady Fettercairn, who had approached them unnoticed.

Blushing deeply, Dulcie, with tremulous little fingers, reopened the locket, expectant, perhaps, of reprehension; but Lady Fettercairn became strangely agitated.

'Lennard!' she exclaimed. 'This is my son Lennard as he looked when I saw him last.'

'Oh, no, madam, that cannot be,' said Dulcie.

'Where got you it?'

'At home in Devonshire, where the photograph was taken about a year ago.'

'Ah—true,' said Lady Fettercairn: 'when Lennard was that

age—the age of this young man—the art was scarcely known. And who is he?’

Dulcie hesitated.

‘I have no right to ask,’ said Lady Fettercairn, hauteur blending with the certainly deep interest with which she regarded the contents of the still open locket.

‘One who loved me,’ said Dulcie, with a kind of sob.

‘And whom you love?’ said the lady, stiffly.

‘Yes, madam.’

‘It is the image of Lennard!’ continued Lady Fettercairn musingly; ‘but there sounds the breakfast-bell,’ she added, and turned abruptly away.

What were the precise antecedents of this girl, Miss Carlyon, who had been recommended to her by her friend, the vicar, in London? thought Lady Fettercairn, as her cold, passive, and aristocratic frame of mind resumed its sway. Yet, though she remained silent on the subject, and disdained to inquire further about it, that miniature interested her deeply, and frequently at table and elsewhere Dulcie caught her eyes resting on the locket.

It filled her with a distinct and haunting memory of one seen long ago, and not in dreams—for Lady Fettercairn was not of an imaginative turn of mind.

It may seem strange that amid all this Dulcie never thought of mentioning that Florian was the cousin of Shafto; but she knew how distasteful to Lady Fettercairn was anyone connected with the family of Lennard’s dead wife, Flora MacIan.

When Shafto heard of all this, as he did somehow, the qualms of alarm he experienced on seeing first Madelon Galbraith and then Dulcie at Craigengowan were renewed; and he resolved, if he could, to get possession of that locket, and deface or destroy the dangerous likeness it contained.

But Dulcie had an intuitive perception or suspicion of this; and finding that his evil gaze rested upon it repeatedly, after a time she ceased to wear it, but locked it away in a secure place, from whence she could draw it when she chose for her own private delectation.



When Finella, in mutual confidence, told Dulcie of the manner in which Shafto had brought about a separation between herself and Vivian Hammersley, the girl expressed her indignation, but no surprise. She knew all he was capable of doing, and related the two ugly episodes of the locket.

'Heavens !' exclaimed Finella ; 'if Lord Fettercairn knew of this business he would surely expel him from Craigengowan.'

'No, no ; the person expelled would to a certainty be poor me—an expulsion that Lady Fettercairn would endorse to the full on learning that Shafto had sought to make love to me. Then I should again be more than ever homeless ; so let us be silent, dear Finella.'

'Do you ever ride, Dulcie ?' asked the latter.

'How can I ride now ? In papa's time I had a beautiful little Welsh cob, on which I used to scamper about the shady lanes and breezy moors in Devonshire. I can see still in fancy his dear little head, high withers, and short joints.'

'You shall ride with me,' said Finella, in her pretty, imperative way. 'I have three pads of my own.'

'But I have no habit.'

'Then you shall wear one of mine. I have several. A blue or green one will be most becoming to you ; and though you are as plump as a little English partridge, I have one that will be sure to fit you.'

'Thanks. Oh, how kind you are !'

'Now, let us go to the stables. I go there once every day to feed "Fern," as you shall see.'

Sandy Macrupper, the head-groom, always thought the stables never looked so bright as during the time of Finella's visit. He had known her from her childhood, and taught her to ride her first Shetland pony. He was a hard-featured and sour-visaged old man, with that peculiarity of grooms, a very small head and puckered face. He was clad in an orthodox, long-bodied waistcoat, in one of the pockets of which a currycomb was stuck, and wore short corded breeches. He was always closely shaven, and wore a scrupulously white neckcloth, carefully tied. His grey eyes were bright and keen ; his short legs had

that peculiar curve that indicates a horsey individual. And when the ladies appeared, he came forth from the harness-room with smiling alacrity, a piece of chamois-leather in one hand and a snaffle-bit in the other.

‘Good-morning, miss,’ said he, touching his billycock.

‘Good-morning, Sandy. I want Fern and Flirt for a spin about the country to-day after luncheon,’ and the sound of Finella’s voice was the signal for many impatient neighs of welcome and much rattling of stall-collars and wooden balls.

Fern, the favourite pad of Finella—a beautiful roan, with a deal of Arab blood in it—gave a loud whinny of delight and recognition, and thrust forward his soft, tan-coloured muzzle in search of the carrot which she daily brought to regale him with ; but Flirt preferred apples and sugar. Then, regardless of what stablemen might be looking on, she put her arms round Flirt’s neck, and rubbed her peach-like cheek against his velvety nose.

On hearing of the projected ride, at luncheon, Lady Fettercairn’s face grew cloudy, and she took an opportunity of saying :

‘Finella, you are putting that girl, Miss Carlyon, quite out of her place, and I won’t stand it.’

‘Oh, grandmamma !’ exclaimed Finella, deprecatingly, ‘this is only a little kindness to one who has seen better times ; and she had a horse of her own in Devonshire.’

‘Ah ! no doubt she told you so.’

The horses were duly brought round in time : Fern with his silky mane carefully and prettily plaited by the nimble little fingers of Finella—a process which old Sandy Macrupper always watched with delight and approval. And Dulcie, mounted on Flirt, a spotted grey, looked every inch a lady of the best style, in an apple-green habit of Finella’s, with her golden hair beautifully coiled under a smart top-hat, put well forward over her forehead. She was perfect, to her little tan-coloured gauntlet gloves, and was—Lady Fettercairn, who glanced from the window, was compelled to admit silently—‘very good form indeed.’

Escorted by Shafto and a groom, they set forth ; and, save

for the unwelcome presence of the former, to Dulcie it was a day of delight, which she thought she never should forget.

Dulcie, we have said, had been wont to scamper about the Devonshire lanes, where the clustered apples grew thick overhead, on her Welsh cob, and now on horseback she felt at home in her own sphere again ; her colour mounted, her blue eyes sparkled, and the girl looked beautiful indeed.

She almost felt supremely happy ; and Finella laughed as she watched her enjoying the sensations of power and management, and the independence given by horse-exercise—the life, the stir, the action, and joyous excitement of a thorough good ‘spin’ along a breezy country road.

Shafto, however, was in a sullen temper, and vowed secretly that never again would he act their cavalier, because the girls either ignored him by talking to each other, or only replied to any remarks he ventured to make, and these were seldom of an amusing or original nature. Indeed, he felt painfully and savagely how hateful his presence was to both.

Despite Lady Fettercairn, other rides followed ; for Finella was difficult to control, and in her impulsive and coaxing ways proved generally irrepressible. Thus she took Dulcie all over the country : to the ruined castle of Fettercairn, to Den Finella, and to the great cascade—a perpendicular rock, more than seventy feet high, over which the Finella River pours on its way from Garvock, where it rises, to the sea at Johnshaven.

Returning slowly from one of these rides, with their pads at a walking pace, with the groom a long way in their rear, Dulcie, breaking a long silence, during which both seemed to be lost in thought, said :

‘Troubles are doubly hard to bear when we have to keep them to ourselves ; thus I feel happier, at least easier in mind, now that I have told you all about poor Florian.’

‘And I, that I have told you about Captain Hammersley,’ replied Finella ; ‘though of course I shall never see him again.’

‘Never—why so?’

‘After what he saw, and what he no doubt thinks, how can I expect to do so? My greatest affliction is that I must seem



so black in his eyes. Yet it is impossible for me not to feel the deepest and most tender interest in him—to watch with aching heart the news from the seat of war, and all the movements of his regiment—the movements in which he must have a share.'

'Things cannot, nay, must not, go on thus between you. The false position should be cleared up, explained away. What is to be done?'

'Grin and bear it, as the saying is, Dulcie. Nothing can avail us now—nothing,' said Finella, with a break in her voice.

'Finella, let me help you and him.'

'How?'

'I shall write about it to Florian. I mean to write him now, at all events.'

Despite all she had been told about the antecedents of the latter, Finella blushed scarlet at the vision of what Hammersley—the proud and haughty Vivian Hammersley—would think of his love-affairs being put into the hands of one of his own soldiers; but Dulcie, thinking only of who Florian was, did not see it in this light, or that it would seem like a plain attempt to lure an angry lover back again.

'Unless you wish me to die of shame,' said Finella, after a bitter pause—'shame and utter mortification—you will do no such thing, Dulcie Carlyon!'

The latter looked at the speaker, and saw that her dark eyes were flashing dangerously as she added:

'He left me in a gust of rage and suspicion of his own free will; and of his own free will must he return.'

'Will he ever do so, if the cause for that just rage and suspicion, born of his very love for you, is not explained away?'

'No, certainly. He is proud, and so am I; but I will never love anyone else, and mean in time to come to invest in the sleekest of tom-cats and die an old maid,' she added, with a little sob in her throat.

'And meanwhile you are in misery?'

'As you see, Dulcie; but I will rather die than fling myself

at any man's head, especially at his, through the medium of a letter of yours; but I thank you for the kind thought, dear Dulcie.'

So the latter said no more on the subject, yet made up her mind as to what she would do.

The circumstance that both their lovers, so dissimilar in rank and private means, were serving in the same regiment, facing the same dangers, and enduring the same hardships, formed a kind of sympathetic tie between these two girls, who could share their confidences with each other alone, though their positions in life, by present rank and their probable future, were so far apart.

They never thought of how young they were, or that, if both their lovers were slain or never seen by them again through the contingencies of life, others would come to them and speak of love, perhaps successfully. Such ideas never occurred, however. Both were too romantic to be practical; and both—the rich one and the poor one—only thought of the desolate and forlorn years that stretched like a long and gloomy vista before them, with nothing to look forward to, and no one to care for, unless they became Sisters of Charity; and Finella, with all her thousands, sometimes spoke bitterly of doing so.

---

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE EVENING OF GINGHILOVO.

MUCH about the time that the conversation we have just recorded was taking place between the two fair equestriennes, the subject thereof, then with the troops in the laager of Ginghilovo, was very full of the same matter they had in hand—himself and his supposed wrongs.

'She never could have really cared for me, or she never could have acted as she did, unless she wished with the contingencies of war to have two strings to her bow,' thought

Hammersley, as he lay on the grass a little apart from all, and sucked his briar-root viciously. 'Perhaps she thought it was her money I wanted—not herself. Ah, how could she look into her glass and think so!'

Ever before him he had that horrid episode in the shrubbery, and saw in memory the girl he loved so passionately in the arms of another, who was giving her apparently the kisses men only give to one woman in the world—a sight that seemed to scorch his eyes and heart.

'Yes,' he would mutter, 'one may be mistaken in some things, but there are some things there is *no* mistaking, and that affair was one of them.'

Perhaps at *that* very instant of time Finella was posed, as he had seen her last, with 'Cousin' Shafto, and the thought made him hate her! He felt himself growing colder and harder, though his heart ached sorely, for the 'soul-hunger of love' was in it.

'Well, well,' he would mutter, as he tugged his dark moustache; 'what are called hearts have surely gone to the wall in this Victorian age.'

His bitter memories would have soon passed away, could he have seen, as if in a magic mirror, at that moment Finella, in her riding habit, on her knees in the solitude of her own room, before a large photo of a handsome young fellow in the uniform of the 24th (his helmet under his right arm, his left hand on the hilt of his sword), gazing at it, yet scarcely seeing it, so full were her soft eyes of hot salt tears, while her sweet little face looked white, woebegone, and most miserable. But now the bugles sounding on the various flanks of the laager, when about six in the evening a general hum of voices pervaded it, and the order 'Stand to your arms!' announced that the enemy was in sight of the trenches.

In front of the old kraal of Ginghilovo, behind an earthen breastwork and abattis of felled trees, were the 60th Rifles, in their tunics of dark green, and sailors of the *Shah* with their Gatling guns, which they playfully called 'bull-dogs and barrel-organs.'



They were flanked by some of the 57th and two seven-pounders; the Argyleshire Highlanders, then in green tartan trews, held the rear-face; and the defences were prolonged by the Lanarkshire, the 3rd Buffs, and some more of the Naval Brigade with a rocket battery.

Every heart in the laager beat high, and every face flushed with intense satisfaction, as two sombre columns of Zulus appeared, spreading like a human flood over the ground, after crossing the reedy Inyezene stream, deploying in a loose formation, which enabled them to find cover behind scattered boulders and patches of bush.

Now, when on the eve of an action, Hammersley, like every other officer, felt that new and hitherto unknown dread and doubt of the result which has more than once come upon our troops of all ranks, born of the new and abominable system which in so many ways has achieved the destruction of the grand old British army—‘the army which would go anywhere, and do anything’—by the abolition of the regimental system, and with it the power of cohesion; but the worst, the so-called ‘territorial system,’ had not yet come.

Encouraged by the countenance and praises of Hammersley, Florian left nothing undone to win himself a name, and had already become distinguished for his daring, discretion, and acuteness of observation among all the Mounted Infantry when scouting or reconnoitring, and his further promotion seemed now to be only a matter of time.

Both courted danger, apparently with impunity, as the brave and dashing often do: Florian with a view to the future; Hammersley to forget. Soldiers will make fun, even when under fire, so some of his comrades quizzed Florian in his old laced tunic, and dubbed him ‘the Captain’; but Vivian Hammersley thought, how like a gentleman and officer he looked in the half-worn garment he had given him.

Through the long, wavy, and reed-like grass two columns of Zulus crept swiftly on in close rather than extended order, and furiously assailed the north face of the square held by the Highlanders, flanked as usual by extended horns, and all yelling

like fiends broken loose, while brandishing their great shields and glittering assegais, till smitten with death and destruction under the close-rolling Highland musketry.

They were commanded by a noble savage, named Somapo, with Dabulamanzi and the eldest son of Sirayo as seconds.

Almost unseen by the darkness of their uniforms, the Rifles lay down flat behind their shelter-trenches; the barrels of their weapons rested firmly on the earthen bank, enabling them to take steady and deadly aim, while dropping in quick succession the cartridges into the breech-blocks without even moving the left arm or the right shoulder, against which the butt-plate of the rifle rested, and their terrible fire knocked over in writhing heaps the Zulus, who, in all their savage fury and bravery, came rushing on ten thousand strong and more.

‘Their white and coloured shields,’ wrote one who was present, ‘their crests of leopard-skin and feathers, and wild ox-tails dangling from their necks, gave them a terrible unearthly appearance. Every ten or fifteen yards, and a shot would be fired, and then, with an unearthly yell, they would again rush on with a sort of measured dance, while a humming and buzzing sound in time to their movement was kept up.’

Meanwhile the laager was literally zoned with fire and enveloped with smoke; yet within it no sound was heard save the rattling roar of the musketry, the clatter of the breech-blocks, and triumphant bagpipes of the Highlanders, with an occasional groan or exclamation of agony as a bullet found its billet.

In the fury of their advance and struggles to get onward over their own dead and dying, the Zulus from the rear would break through the fighting line, jostling and dashing each other aside, and rush yelling on, until they too bit the dust.

The booming of the Gauling guns and the dread hiss of the blazing rockets were heard ever and anon amid the medley of other sounds, and for half an hour the showers of lead and iron tore through and through the naked masses, where the places of the fallen were instantly taken by others.

By half-past six the shrill yells of the Zulus died away; but

in mute despair and fury they still struggled in hope to storm the laager, when, if once within its defences, the fate of all would be sealed.

Four times like a living sea they flung themselves against it, and four times by sheets of lead and iron they were hurled back from the reddened bayonet's point, while some remained in the open, firing from behind the bloody piles of their own dead, which lay in awful lines or swathes of black bodies with white shields, a hundred yards apart, in rear of each other.

At last the survivors gave way, and all fled in confusion.

'Forward, the Mounted Infantry!' cried Lord Chelmsford.

And these, under Captains Barrow and Hammersley, sprang with alacrity to their saddles, slinging their rifles as they filed out of the laager.

'Front form squadron!' was now the order, and the sections of fours swept round into line.

'Come on, my lads!' cried Hammersley, as he unsheathed his sword and dug the spurs into his horse; 'forward—trot, gallop! By Jove! an hour of this work'

"Is worth an age without a name!"

And away went the Mounted Infantry over the terrible swathes at a swinging pace.

Like most of the few officers of that peculiar and extemporised force, Vivian Hammersley had been accustomed to cross country and ride to hounds, and to deem that the greatest outdoor pleasure in life.

Tattoo, Florian's horse, fortunately for him in the work he had to do that evening, proved to be a tried Cape shooting-horse, accustomed to halt the moment his rein is dropped, and to stand like a rock when his rider fires. An experienced shooting-horse requires no sign from his master when required to stand, and on hearing a sound or stir in the bush is alert as a dog scenting danger or game.

Florian loved the animal like a friend, and often shared his beer with him, as Homer tells us the Greek warriors of old shared their wine with their battle-chargers; we suppose it is



only human nature that we must love something that is in proximity with us.

The Mounted Infantry overtook the fugitive Zulus, and fell furiously, sword in hand, upon their left flank, but not without receiving a scattered fire that emptied a few saddles.

The routed fled with a speed peculiarly their own ; but Captain Barrow and his improvised troopers were in close pursuit, and from the laager their sword-blades could be seen flashing in the evening sunshine, as the cuts were dealt downward on right and left, and the foe was overtaken, pierced, and ridden over and through.

In this work the force necessarily became somewhat broken, and Hammersley, who, in the ardour of the pursuit, and being splendidly mounted, had outstripped all the Mounted Infantry and gone perilously far in advance, had his horse shot under him.

‘Captain Hammersley—Hammersley! He will be cut to pieces!’ cried several of the soldiers, who saw him and his horse go down in a cloud of dust, and in another moment he was seen astride the fallen animal contending against serious odds with his sword and revolver. And now ensued one of those episodes which were of frequent occurrence in the service of our Mounted Infantry.

Florian saw the sore strait in which Hammersley was placed, and had, quick as thought, but one desire—to save him or die by his side. At that part of the field a watercourse—a tributary of the Inyezene River—separated him from Hammersley, but putting the pace upon Tattoo, he rode gallantly to face it. Rider and horse seemed to possess apparently but one mind—one impulse. Tattoo cocked his slender ears, gave a glance at the water, sparkling in the setting sun, and, springing from his powerful and muscular hind-legs, cleared the stream from bank to bank—a distance not less than fifteen feet.

‘Well done, old man!’ exclaimed Florian ; ‘you *are* game!’

‘Hurrah!’ burst from several of the troop, some of whom failed to achieve the leap. So Florian rode forward alone, and in less time than we have taken to record it, was by the side of

Hammersley, who was bleeding from a wound in the left arm from an assegai launched at him by one of three powerful savages with whom he was contending, and in whom Florian recognised Methagazulu, the son of the famous Sirayo.

The last shot in Hammersley's revolver disposed of one ; Florian shot a second, and drove his bayonet through the side of Sirayo's son, whom others were now returning to succour, and, lifting Hammersley on his own horse, conducted him rearward to a place of safety, covering the rear with his rifle, pouring in a quick fire with an excellent aim, till a dozen of his comrades came up and received them both with a cheer.

Though wounded, Methagazulu did not die then, for, as we have elsewhere said, the close of the war found him a prisoner in the gaol of Pietermaritzburg.

But for the succour so promptly accorded by Florian, another moment would have seen that savage, after wounding Hammersley by one assegai, gave him the *coup de grâce* with another ; as it is a superstition with the Zulus that if they do not rip their enemies open, disembowelling them, as their bodies swell and burst when dead, so will those of the slayers in life ; and so firm is their belief in that, that after the victory had been won at Rorke's Drift many of the Zulus were seen to pause, even under a heavy fire, to rip up a few of our dead who lay outside the entrenchment ; and cases have been known in which warriors who have been unable to perform this barbarous ceremony have committed suicide to escape what they deemed their inevitable doom.

Florian tied his handkerchief round Hammersley's arm, above the wound, to stay the blood, till he left him safely with the ambulance waggons, and in care of Staff-Surgeon Gallipot ; and though faint with the bleeding, for the wound was long and deep—a regular gash—Hammersley wrung the hand of his sayer, and said :

‘My gallant young fellow, you will have good reason if I live—as I doubt not I will—to recall this evening's work with satisfaction.’

‘I shall ever remember, sir, with pride that I saved your

life—the life of the only friend I have now in our decimated regiment since I lost poor Bob Edgehill.’

‘It is not that I mean,’ said Hammersley, faintly, ‘but, if spared, I shall see to your future, and all that sort of thing, you understand.’

‘I thank you, sir, and hope——’

‘Hope nothing,’ said Hammersley, closing his eyes, as memory brought a gush of bitterness to his heart.

‘Why, sir?’

‘Because when one is prepared for the worst, disappointment can never come.’

Florian knew not what to make of this sudden change of mood in his officer, and so remained discreetly silent.

‘Have you any water in your bottle?’ asked Hammersley.

‘A little, sir.’

‘Then give me a drop, for God’s sake—mine is empty.’

Florian took the water-bottle from his waist-belt and drew out the plug; the sufferer drank thirstily, and on being placed in a sitting position, with a blanket about him, strove to obtain a little sleep, being weary and faint with the events of the past day.

‘Whoever he is, that lad has good blood in his veins, and he has no fear of lavishing it,’ was his last thought as he watched the receding figure of Florian leading away his favourite Tattoo by the bridle.

Our total casualties at Ginghilovo were only sixty-one; those of the Zulus above twelve hundred. The story of the encounter might have been different had another column of ten thousand men, which had been despatched from Ulundi by Cetewayo the day after the march of Somapo, effected a junction with the latter.

Etschowe, the point to be relieved, was now fifteen miles distant; but Colonel Pearson in his isolated fort must have heard of the victory, for Florian, when out with a few files on scouting duty, could see the signals of congratulation flashed therefrom.

After the fierce excitement of the past day, he felt—he knew



not why—depressed and almost sorrowful ; but perhaps the solitudes among which he rode impressed him when night came on.

Lighted up by hundreds and thousands of stars, the clear sky spread like a vast shining canopy overhead, and then the great round moon shed down a flood of silver sheen on the grassy downs where the black bodies of the naked dead, with fallen jaws and glistening teeth and eyes, lay thick as leaves in autumn, and Tattoo picked his steps gingerly among them.

And in such a solemn and silent time, more keenly than ever, came to Florian's mind the ever-recurring thoughts of Dulcie Carlyon and of what she was doing ; where was she and with whom—in safety or in peril ?

Next morning Florian—as he was detailed for duty to the front with the Mounted Infantry—paid a farewell visit to Captain Hammersley, whom he found reposing among some straw in a kind of tilt-cart, and rather feverish from the effects of his wound, and who had been desired to remain behind in the laager for a little time, though he could with difficulty be prevailed upon to do so.

Preceding the march of the column, the Mounted Infantry under Barrow filed forth at an easy pace in search of the enemy.

It was scarcely a new experience to Florian now, or to any man with the army in Zululand, that of putting a savage to death. Every rifle slew them by scores, when a hundred rounds of ammunition per man were poured into the naked hordes in less than an hour's time.

Lord Chelmsford left some of the Kentish Buffs, the Lanarkshire, and the Naval Brigade to garrison the laager at Ginghilo, and marched for Etschowe with the 57th, the 60th Rifles, and Argyleshire Highlanders, escorting a long train of Scottish carts, laden with food and stores, preceded by the Mounted Infantry scouting far in advance.

The whole column wore the white helmet, but the dark green of the Rifles and the green tartan trews of the Highlanders varied the colour of the scarlet mass that marched up

the right bank of the Inyezene river, with drums beating and bayonets flashing in the April sunshine.

Along the whole line of march were seen shields, rifles, assegais, furs, and feathers strewed about in thousands, cast away by the fugitives who had fled from Ginghilovo, and here and there the Kaffir vultures, hovering in mid-air above a donga, or swooping down into it with a fierce croak, indicated where some dead men were lying.

Briskly the troops pushed on to rescue Colonel Pearson and his isolated garrison, which, during a blockade that had now extended to ten weeks, had been in daily expectation of experiencing the fate of those who perished at Isandhlwana ; and surmounting all the natural difficulties of a rugged country, intersected by watercourses which recent rains had swollen, by sunset the mounted men under Barrow were close to the fort, and heard the hearty British cheers of a hungry garrison mingling with a merry chorus which they were singing.

Under Colonel Pemberton, the Rifles pushed on ahead with Lord Chelmsford, just as an officer on a grey charger came dashing round the base of the hill surmounted by the fort.

‘Here, is Pearson, gentlemen,’ cried the Commander-in-Chief.

‘How are you, my friend?’

‘Old fellow—how are you?’ and grasping each other’s hand, they rode on towards the fort, where the General was received with an enthusiasm which grew higher when the Argyleshire Highlanders marched in with all their kilted pipers playing ‘The Campbells are coming.’

The fort was destroyed and abandoned, and on the 4th of April the united columns began to fall back on Ginghilovo, the Mounted Infantry as usual in front, but clad in the uniform of that service—a Norfolk jacket and long untanned boots, all patched and worn now.

It was justly conceived that the laager would not be reached without fighting, as a body of Zulus, led in person by Dabulamanzi and the son of Sirayo, was expected to bar the way, and consequently serious loss of life was expected ; but so far as

Florian was concerned, he felt that he could face any danger now with comparative indifference, and his daily pleasure consisted in carefully grooming and feeding Tattoo; and Florian, as he rode on, was thinking with some perplexity of the farewell words of Captain Hammersley.

‘Good-bye, Sergeant—we have all our troubles, I suppose, whatever they are, and I should not care much if mine were ended here at Ginghilovo.’

‘I should think that you cannot have much to trouble you, sir,’ was Florian’s laughing response as he left him.

---

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### NEWS FROM THE SEAT OF WAR.

It was a soft and breezy April morning. The young leaves had scarcely burst their husk-like sheaths in the alternate showers and sunshine; the lambs were bleating in the meadows, the birds sang on bush and tree, the white clouds were floating in the azure sky, and the ivy rustled on the old walls of turreted Craigengowan, when there came some tidings that found a sharp echo in the hearts of Dulcie and Finella.

Arm in arm, as girls will often do, they were idling and talking of themselves and their own affairs in all the luxury of being together alone, near a stately old gateway of massive iron bars, hung on solid pillars, surmounted by time-worn wyverns, and all around it, without and within, grew tall nettles, mighty hemlock, and other weeds; while the avenue to which it once opened had disappeared, and years upon years ago been blended with the lawn, for none had trod it for 146 years, since the last loyal Laird of Craigengowan had ridden forth to fight for King James VIII, saying that it was not to be unclosed again till his return; and he returned no more, so it remains closed unto this day.

And it has been more than once averred by the peasantry



that on the 13th of November, the anniversary of the battle in which he fell, when the night wind is making an uproar in the wintry woods of Craigengowan, the low branches crashing against each other, a weird moon shines between rifts in the black flying clouds, and the funeral-wreaths of the departed harvest flutter on the leafless hedges, a spectral horseman, in the costume of Queen Anne's time, his triangular hat bound with feathers, a square-skirted coat and gilded gambadoes—a pale, shimmering figure, through which the stars sparkle—can be seen outside the old iron gate, gazing with wistful and hollow eyes through the rusty bars, as if seeking for the vanished avenue down which he had ridden with his cuirassed troop to fight for King James VIII; for sooth to say, old Craigengowan is as full of ghostly legends as haunted Glamis itself.

Finella had just told this tale to Dulcie when a valet rode past the gate and entered the lawn by another with the post-bag for the house. From this Finella took out a newspaper—one of the many it contained—and with eager eyes the two girls scanned its columns for the last news from Zululand, and simultaneously a shrill exclamation, which made the man turn in his saddle as he rode on, escaped them both.

The paper contained a brief telegraphic notice of the conflict at the laager of Ginghilovo, and with it the following paragraph:

‘Captain Vivian Hammersley, of the unfortunate 24th Regiment, led a squadron of Barrow's Mounted Infantry; and having, with the most brilliant gallantry, pressed the flying foe much too far, had his horse shot under him, and was in danger of being instantly assegaied by several infuriated savages, who were driven off and shot down in quick succession by Sergeant Florian MacIan, who mounted the wounded officer on his own horse and brought him safely into the lines, for which noble act of humanity and valour he is, we believe, recommended for promotion by Captain Barrow, of the 19th Hussars, commanding the Mounted Infantry, and by Lord Chelmsford. The fatal day of Isandhlwana has made many commissions vacant

in the unfortunate 24th Foot ; and we have no doubt that one of them will be conferred upon this gallant young sergeant.'

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

'Oh, Dulcie, let me kiss you—I can't kiss your Florian just now!' exclaimed the impulsive Finella, embracing her companion, whose eyes, like her own, were brimming with tears of joy and sympathy.

Hammersley had received a wound of which no details were given ; and that circumstance, by its vaguity, filled the heart of Finella with the keenest anxiety. Oh, if he should die believing what he did of her, when she had been and was still so true and loyal to him !

The intelligence rather stunned her ; and for some minutes she remained paralysed with dismay. She was powerless, with all her wealth, to succour in any way her suffering lover, and no resolution could shape itself in her mind. He might be dying, or already dead, for the fight had taken place some days ago—dying amid suffering and misery, while she remained idly, lazily, and in comfort amid the luxuries of Craigengowan. Even Dulcie failed to console her ; and declining to appear at the breakfast-table, she took refuge in her own room, with the usual feminine plea of a headache.

'Florian, poor dear Florian ! so good, so brave, so fearless !' said Dulcie to herself aloud ; 'how glad I am he has achieved this, for *her* sake !'

How sweet and soft grew her voice as she uttered the name of the lost, the absent one, while an hysterical lump was rising in her throat, and Shafto, who had seen the paper, and knew the source of this emotion, looked grimly in her face, with twitching lips and knitted brows.

'I have no chance,' thought he, 'with these two girls—either Dulcie the poor or Finella the rich. Yet why should I not contrive to bend *both* to my purpose ?' was his evil after-thought. 'Well,' said he aloud, 'you have seen the news, of course ?'

'Yes, Shafto,' replied Dulcie, in a low voice, while her tears fell fast.

‘So—he is not killed yet !’

She regarded him with bitter reproach.

‘Don’t cry, Dulcie!’ said Shafto, with a little emotion of shame, ‘or you will make me feel like a brute now.’

‘I always thought you must have felt like one long ago,’ retorted the girl, as she swept disdainfully past him.

As Lord and Lady Fettercairn had no desire to bring the name of Captain Hammersley on the *tapis*, no reference whatever to the affair of Ginghilovo, or even to the Zulu War, was made in the presence of Finella.

Even if the latter had not been engaged, as she still could not help deeming herself, to Hammersley, and had she not a repugnance to Shafto, her pride and her whole soul must have revolted against a *mariage de convenance*. She had formed, girl-like, her own conceptions of an ideal man, and beyond all whom she met, in London or elsewhere, Vivian Hammersley was her ‘Prince Charming’; and in a day or two her mind was partially set at rest when she read a description of his wound, a flesh one, inflicted by an assegai, and which was then healing fast, but, as she knew, only to enable him to face fresh perils.

To be bartered away to anyone after being grotesquely wooed did not suit her independent views, and ere long her grandparents began to think with annoyance that they had better let her alone; but Lady Fettercairn was impatient and irrepressible.

Not so Shafto.

He had a low opinion of the sex, picked up perhaps in the bar-parlour of the inn at Revelstoke, if not inherent in his own nature. He had read somewhere that ‘women love a judicious mixture of hardihood and flattery—the whole secret lies in that’; also, that if their hearts are soft their heads are softer in proportion.

Lady Fettercairn was somewhat perplexed when watching the young folks at Craigengowan.

She shrewdly suspected, of course, that Finella’s coldness to Shafto was due to the influence of their late guest, Hammersley, though she never could have guessed at the existence of the



wedding-ring and diamond keeper he had entrusted to her care ; but she failed to understand the terms on which her 'grandson' was with her companion, Miss Carlyon ; and though there was nothing tangible or reprehensible, there was an undefined something in their bearing she did not like.

Sometimes, when talking of Devonshire, of Revelstoke, of the old town of Newton Ferrars, the dell that led to Noss, of the Yealm, the Erme, and the sea-beat Mewstone as safe and neutral topics, the girl seemed affable enough to him, for memories of her English home softened her heart ; but when other topics were broached she was constrained to him and icy cold.

Was this acting ?

To further the interests of Shafto by keeping him and Finella isolated and as much together as possible, Lady Fettercairn did not go to London and thus seek society. Fashionable folks—unless Parliamentary—do not return to town till Easter ; but Lord Fettercairn, though a Representative Peer, cared very little about English and still less about Scottish affairs, or indeed any interests but his own ; so, instead of leaving Craigengowan, they had invited a few guests there—men who had come for rod-fishing in the Bervie, the Carron, and the Finella, with some ladies to entertain them, thus affording the girl means of avoiding Shafto whenever she chose.

The stately terrace before the house often looked gay from the number of guests promenading in the afternoon, or sitting in snug corners in wicker chairs covered with soft rugs—the ladies drinking tea, the bright colours of their dresses coming out well against the grey walls of the picturesque old mansion.

Among other visitors were the vinegar-visaged Lady Drumshoddy, and Messrs. Kippilaw, senior and junior, the latter a dapper little tomtit of a Writer to the Signet, intensely delighted and flattered to be among such 'swell' company, believing it was the result of his natural brilliance and attractions, and not of respect for his worthy old father, Kenneth Kippilaw.

The latter—a *rara avis*, scarce as the dodo and his kindred—was intensely national, a lover of his country and of every-

thing Scottish; an enthusiast at Burns' festivals, and singularly patriotic to be what is locally termed a 'Parliament House bred man.' Thus the anti-nationality or utter indifference of Lord Fettercairn was a frequent bone of contention between them; and so bitterly did they sometimes argue about Scotland and her neglected interests, that it is a marvel the peer did not seek out a more obsequious agent.

'Like his uncle, the late Master of Melfort, Mr. Shafto must go into Parliament,' said old Mr. Kippilaw; 'but I hope he will make a better use of his time.'

'What do you mean?' asked Lord Fettercairn coldly

'By attending to Scottish affairs, and getting us equal grants with England and Ireland for public purposes.'

'Stuff—the old story, my dear sir. Who cares about Scotland or her interests?'

'Ay, who indeed!' exclaimed old Kippilaw, growing warm.

'She is content to be a mere province now.'

'The more shame for her—a province that contributes all her millions to the Imperial Exchequer and gets nothing in return.'

'A sure sign she doesn't want anything,' replied the peer, with one of his silent laughs. 'I wish you would not worry me with this patriotic "rot," Kippilaw—excuse the vulgarity of the phrase; but so long as I can get my rents out of Craigengowan and Finella, I don't care a jot if all the rest, Scotland with all its rights and wrongs, history, poetry, and music, was ten leagues under the sea!'

So thus, for two reasons, political and personal, the 'Fettercairns' just then did not go to 'town.'

On the terrace this very afternoon Lady Fettercairn was watching Finella and Dulcie, linked arm in arm, conversing apart from all, and her smooth brow clouded; for she knew well that the fact of Hammersley owing his life to Florian MacIan would make—as it did—a new tie between the two girls.

'You see, Shafto,' said she, 'how more than ever does Finella put that girl out of her place. Though most useful as

she is to me, always pleasant and irreproachably ladylike, I think I must get rid of her.'

'Not yet—not yet, grandmother,' said Shafto, who did not just *then* wish this climax; 'do give her another chance.'

'To please you I will, my dear boy; but I fear I am rash.'

'I wish Finella were not so beastly rich!' he exclaimed.

'Do not use such shocking terms, Shafto! But why?

'It makes me look like a fortune-hunter, being after her.'

'“After her”? Another vulgarism—impossible—you—you—the heir of Fettercairn!'

'Well, it gives one no credit for disinterested affection,' said this plausible young gentleman.

We have said that Lady Fettercairn was irrepressible in seeking to control Finella.

'How quiet and abstracted you seem! Why don't you entertain our friends?' said she, as the girl drew near her, in an angle of the terrace, where they were alone.

'I am thinking, grandmamma,' said Finella, wearily.

'You seem to be for ever thinking, child; and I wonder what it can all be about.'

'I don't believe, grandmamma, it would interest you,' said Finella, a little defiantly.

'There you are wrong, Finella, what interests you, must of necessity interest me,' said Lady Fettercairn, haughtily yet languidly, as she fanned herself.

'Not always.'

'Is it something new, then? I suspect your thoughts,' she continued with some asperity. 'Finella, listen to me again. You and Shafto are the only two left of the Melfort family; we wish the two branches united, for their future good—the good of the name and the title; and if Shafto goes into Parliament, I do not see why he should not perhaps become Viscount or Earl of Fettercairn.'

'The old story! I have no ambition, grandmamma,' shrugging her shoulders, 'and certainly none to be the wife of Shafto, even were he made a duke. So please to let me



alone,' she added, desperately, 'or I may tell you that of—of—Shafto you may not like to hear.'

And in sooth now, Lady Fettercairn, like her lord, had heard so much evil of Shafto lately that she abruptly dropped the subject for the time.

And now Shafto began once more to persecute poor Dulcie—a persecution which might have a perilous effect upon her future.

---

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### PERSECUTION.

SHAFTO felt, with no small satisfaction, that he could, to a certain extent, control the actions of both these girls. Finella could not reveal the secret of her quarrel with him without admitting the terms on which she had been with Hammersley; and Dulcie, he thought, dared not resent his conduct, lest—through his influence with Lady Fettercairn—she might be cast into the world, without even a certificate that would enable her to procure another situation of any kind. Thus, to a certain extent, he revelled in security so far as both were concerned.

And deeming now that all must be at an end between Finella and Hammersley, he thought to pique the former perhaps by attentions to Dulcie—attentions by which he might ultimately gain some little favours for himself.

In both instances vain thoughts!

He was aware that he had an ample field of old and mutual interest or associations to go back upon with Dulcie; thus he thought, if he could entangle her into an apparent flirtation for the purpose of mortifying Finella, and catching her heart on the rebound, sore as it must be with the seeming indifference of Hammersley, he would gain his end; and this mutual intimacy eventually annoyed and surprised Lady Fettercairn, and was likely to prove fatal to the interests and position of Dulcie,

whom he felt he must either win for himself in some fashion, or, if not, in revenge have her expelled from Craigengowan.

One day the girl was alone. She was feeding the swans in the artificial lakelet that lay below the terrace. It was a serene and sunny forenoon ; the water was smooth as crystal, and reflected the old house with all its turrets, crow-stepped gables, and dormer-gablets line for line. It mirrored also the swans swimming double, bird and shadow, like beautiful drifting boats, and the great white water-lilies, that seemed to sleep rather than float on its surface.

It was indeed a drowsy, golden afternoon, and Dulcie Carlyon, an artist at heart, was fully impressed by the loveliness of her surroundings, when Shafto stood before her.

Shafto !—she quite shivered.

‘Oh !’ she exclaimed, as if a toad had crossed her path.

‘A penny for your thoughts, Dulcie,’ said that personage smilingly, seeing that she had been pondering so deeply that his approach had been unnoticed by her.

‘They might startle you more than you think,’ replied Dulcie, with undisguised annoyance.

‘Indeed ; are you weaving out a romance ?’

‘Perhaps.’

‘With yourself for the heroine, or Finella ; and that fellow Florian for the hero ? Then there must be the requisite villain.’

‘Oh, he is ready to hand,’ said she, daringly, with a flash in her blue eyes.

Shafto’s eye grew black as midnight, and what coarse thing he might have said we know not, but policy made him ignore her reply.

‘Please not to remain speaking to me,’ said she, glancing nervously at the windows of the house ; ‘your doing so may displease the friends of Finella.’

‘It is of her I wish to speak. Listen, Dulcie. I have not the influence over her I had hoped to have before *you* came among us. If that interloper Hammersley had not absorbed her interest, no doubt, as matters once looked, she might have

pleased her relations and bound herself to me, provided she had never found out that I had loved a dear one, far away in Devonshire, and had but a half-concealed fancy for herself.'

Dulcie listened to this special pleading in contemptuous silence.

'I don't want to marry her now, any more than she wants to marry me,' he resumed unblushingly; 'but I may tell you it is rather hard to be ordered to play the lover to a girl who will scarcely throw me a civil word.'

'After the cruel trick you played her, is it to be expected?'

'So—you are in her confidence, then?'

But Dulcie only thought, 'What paradox is this? He dared again to make love to herself, after all that had passed with reference to Florian, and yet to be jealous of Finella's profound disdain of him.'

'Won't you try and love me a little, Dulcie?' said he, attempting his most persuasive tone.

'What *do* you mean, Shafto?' demanded the girl in great anger and perplexity; 'even if I would take you, which I would rather die than do, with all your wealth and prospective title, you could not marry me and Finella too!'

'Who speaks of marriage?' growled Shafto, under his breath, while a malicious smile glittered in his cold eyes, as he added aloud, 'You know which I wish to marry.'

'Then it cannot be me, nor shall it be Finella either, for the matter of that.'

'Does she act under your influence?'

'Do not think of it—she is under a more potent influence than I possess,' replied Dulcie, who, bewildered by his manner and remarks, was turning away, when he again confronted her, and the girl glanced uneasily at the windows, where, although she knew it not, the eyes of those she dreaded most were observing them both.

To marry Dulcie, even if she would have him, certainly did not suit 'the book' of Shafto; but, as he admired her attractive person, and hated Florian with unreasoning rancour, as some men do who have wronged others, he would gladly have lured



her into a *liaison* with himself. He knew, however, her pride and purity too well, but he was not without the hope of blunting them, and eventually bending her to his will, under the threat or pressure of getting her expelled from Craigengowan, and thrown penniless, friendless, and with, perhaps, a tainted name, upon a cold, bitter, and censorious world.

‘I know you better than to believe that you love me any more than I do you,’ said Dulcie, with ill-concealed scorn; ‘love is not in your nature, even for the brilliant Finella. You love her money, not herself.’

Dissembling his rage, he said in a suppliant tone:

‘Why are you so cold and repellent to me, Dulcie?’

‘I do not know that I am markedly so.’

‘But I do: beyond the affair of the locket, born of my very regard for you, what is my offence?’

‘What you are doing now, following me about—forcing your society on me, and tormenting as you do. I shall be compromised with Lady Fettercairn if you do not take care.’

‘I think you treat me with cruel coldness, considering the love I have borne you so long. Why should not we be even the friends we once were at Revelstoke, and like each other always?’

‘After all you have done to Florian!’

‘What *have* I done to Florian?’ he demanded, changing colour under the influence of his own secret thoughts.

‘Cast him forth into the world penniless.’

‘Oh, is that all?’ said he, greatly relieved.

‘Yes, that is all, so far as I know as yet.’

Again his brow darkened at this chance shot; but, still dissembling, he said:

‘My dear little Dulcie, what is the use of all this foolish regard for Florian and revengeful mood at me? We shall never see him again.’

‘Oh, Shafto, how can you talk thus coldly of Florian, with whom you went to school and college together, played together as boys, and read together as men—were deemed almost brothers rather than cousins! Shame on you!’ and she stamped her little foot on the ground as she spoke,

‘How pretty you look when angry! You do not care for me just now, perhaps; but in time you will, Dulcie.’

‘Never, Shafto.’

‘Surely you don’t mean to carry on this game ever and always?’

‘Ever and always, while I am a dependant here.’

‘But I will take you away from here, and you need be a dependant no longer,’ said he, while his countenance brightened and his manner warmed, as he utterly mistook her meaning. ‘My allowance is most handsome, thanks to Lord—Lord—to my grandfather, and he can’t last for ever. The old fellow is sixty-eight if he is a day. Forget all past unpleasantness; think only of the future, and all I can make it for you. I will give you any length of time if you will only give me your love.’

‘Never, I tell you. Oh, this is intolerable!’ exclaimed the girl passionately, finding that he still barred her way.

‘Beware, Dulcie,’ said he, as his shifty eyes flashed. ‘The world and success in it are for him who knows how to wait; meanwhile, let us be friends. Friendship is said to be more enduring than love.’

‘Well—we shall never be even friends again, Shafto.’

‘Why?’

‘Well do you know *why*. And let me remind you that all sin brings its own punishment in this world.’

‘If found out,’ he interrupted.

‘And in the next, whether found out here or not.’

‘Why the deuce do you preach thus to me?’ he asked savagely, his fears again awakened, so true is it that

‘Many a shaft at random sent  
Finds mark the archer never meant.’

‘And what do you take me for that you treat me thus, and talk to me in this manner?’

‘What do I take you for? By your treatment of me I take you to be an insolent, cruel, and heartless fellow, who can be worse at times.’

'Take care! the pedestal you stand on may give way. It lies with me to smash it, and some fine day you may be sorry for the way in which you have dared to treat me, Shafto——'

'Gyle,' interrupted Dulcie almost spitefully.

'Melfort, d——n you!' he retorted coarsely, and losing all command over himself.

Tears now sprang to her eyes, and then, as he half feared to carry the matter so far with her, he apologised.

'Let me pass, sir,' said she.

'Won't you give me one little kiss first, Dulcie?'

She made no reply, but fixed her lovely dark blue eyes upon him with an expression of such loathing and contempt that even *he* was stung to the heart by it.

'Let me pass, sir!' she exclaimed again.

He stood aside to let her do so, and she swept by, holding her golden head haughtily erect; but Dulcie feared him now more than ever, and certainly she had roused revenge in his heart, with certain vague emotions of alarm.

Of all the thousands of homes in Scotland and England how miserable and unlucky was the chance that cast her under the same roof with the evil-minded Shafto! thought the girl in the solitude of her own room. But then, otherwise, she would never have known and shared the sweet and flattering friendship of Finella Melfort; and, as she never knew what wicked game Shafto might play, he would perhaps succeed in depriving her even of that solace as the end of his persecution.

The whole tenor of the conversation or interview forced upon her by Shafto impressed her with a keen and deep sense of humiliation that made her weep bitterly; how much more keen would the sense of that have been had she known, what in the purity of her nature she never suspected, that, amid all his grotesque love-making, marriage was no way comprehended in his scheme!

Much as she disliked Shafto, an emotion of delicacy, with a timid doubt of the future with regard to Captain Hammersley, and what was behind that future with regard to 'the cousins,' as she of course deemed them to be, induced Dulcie to remain



silent with Finella on the subject of his persistent and secret attentions to herself, though she would have deplored to see Finella the wife of Shafto.

The interview we have described had not passed without observers, we have said.

‘Fettercairn, look how Miss Carlyon and Shafto are flirting near the Swans’ Pool!’ said the Lady of that Ilk, drawing her husband’s attention to the pair from a window of the drawing-room.

‘What makes you think they are doing so?’ he asked, but nevertheless with knitted brows.

‘Cannot you see it?’

‘No; it is so long since I did anything in that way myself, that really I—aw——’

‘See with what *empressement* he bends down to address her, and she keeps her head down, too, though she seems to crest it up at times.’

‘But she edges away from him palpably, as if she disliked what he is saying—and, by Jove, she looks indignant, too!’

‘That may be all acting, in suspicion that she is observed, or it may be to lure him on; one never knows what may be passing in a girl’s mind—if she thinks herself attractive especially.’

‘Well—to me they seem quarrelling,’ said Lord Fettercairn.

‘Quarrelling—and with my companion! How could Shafto condescend to do so?’

‘That is more than I can tell you—he is rather a riddle to me; but the girl is decidedly more than pretty, and very good style, too.’

‘And hence the more dangerous. I must speak with Shafto on this subject seriously, or——’

‘What then?’

‘Get rid of her.’

‘If we fail in marrying Shafto to Finella, who can say whom he may marry, as his instincts seem somewhat low, and after we are gone there may be a whole clan of low and sordid prodigals here in Craigengowan.’

‘And Radicals!’ suggested Lady Fettercairn.

‘Desecrating the spots rendered almost sacred by association with a great and famous past,’ said Lord Fettercairn loftily.

What this great and famous ‘past’ was, he could scarcely have told. It was not connected with his mushroom line, whatever it might have been with the former lords of Craigen-gowan, whose guests had at times been Kings of Scotland and Princes of France and Spain.

‘Finella is young, and does not know her own heart,’ he resumed; ‘besides, I believe it is enough generally to recommend a girl to marry a certain man, for her to set her face against him unreasonably. But I think—and hope—that our Finella is different from the common run of girls.’

‘Not in contriving, perhaps, to fall in love with the wrong man.’

‘You mean that young fellow, Hammersley?’

‘Yes; I must own to having most grave suspicions,’ replied Lady Fettercairn.

‘She is a Melfort, and as such has no notion of being coerced.’

Lady Fettercairn thought of Lennard and Flora MacIan, and remained silent, remembering that *he* too, the disowned and the outcast, was a genuine Melfort in the same sense.

---

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### A THREAT.

To Finella, so pure in mind and proud in spirit, it was fast becoming utterly intolerable to find herself in the false and degraded position the craft of Shafto had placed her in with regard to so honourable a man as Vivian Hammersley; and the more she brooded over it, the deeper became her loathing of the daring trickster—a sentiment which she was, by the force of circumstances, compelled to veil and conceal from her

guardians : hence, the more bitter her thoughts, the more passionate her longing for an explanation, and more definite her wishes.

Hammersley, though still a fact, seemed somehow to have passed out of her life ; and thus she often said in a kind of wailing way to Dulcie :

‘Oh, that he had never come here, or that I had never known or met him, in London or anywhere else ! Then I should not have felt what it is to love and to lose him !’

‘Pardon me, darling, but take courage,’ replied Dulcie, caressing her. ‘I have written to Florian at last, and his reply will tell us all about Captain Hammersley, and how he is looking, and so forth ; though Florian, in a position so subordinate, cannot be in his confidence, of course.’

She did not add that she had in her letter told the whole story of the false position in which Finella had been placed, lest the latter’s pride might revolt at such interference in her affairs, however well and kindly meant ; and lest the letter—if it proved disappointing, by her lover remaining jealous, suspicious, obdurate, or contemptuous, if Florian ventured to speak on the subject, which she scarcely hoped—should prove a useless humiliation to Finella, who longed eagerly as herself for the reply.

But Dulcie prayed in her simple heart that good might come of it before the evil which she so nervously dreaded fell upon herself ; for Shafto had made such humble apologies for his conduct to her on the day he interrupted her when feeding the swans, that, though she gave him her hand in token, not of forgiveness but of truce, she feared he was concocting fresh mischief ; for soon after, encouraged thereby, he began his old persecution, but carefully and in secret again.

Finding that his chances with Finella were now apparently *nil*, even though all seemed at an end between her and Vivian Hammersley, Shafto, by force of old habit, perhaps, turned his attention to Dulcie, who, in her humble and dependent capacity, had a difficult card to play, while feeling exasperated and degraded by the passion he expressed for her on every



available opportunity. Not that he would, she suspected, have married a poor girl like her, as one with money, no matter who, was the wisest match for him, lest the discovery of who he was came to pass, though that he deemed impossible now.

Shafto had learned and imitated much among the new and aristocratic folks in whose circle he found himself cast; and thus it was that he dared to make secret love, and to torment the helpless Dulcie with words that spoke of—

‘Riches and love and pleasure,  
And all but the name of wife.’

Had he done that, she would have treated him quite as coldly and scornfully; but she could do no more than she did. Yet he was fast making her life at Craigengowan a torture, and she feared him almost more than his so-called grandmother, who was only a proud and selfish patrician, while he—ah, she knew too well what he was capable of; but Dulcie had something more to learn yet.

One day, after having imbibed more wine, or *eau-de-vie*, than was good for him in Mr. Grapeston’s pantry, as he sometimes did, he addressed the girl in a way there was no misunderstanding. She trembled and grew pale.

‘Well, one thing I promise you if you try to please me,’ said he—‘to *please* me, do you understand?—while you remain under this roof, which I hope, darling, will not be long now—I shall trouble you no more.’

‘To please you, Shafto!’ stammered the girl; ‘what *do* you mean?’

‘I’ll tell you that by-and-bye, my pretty Dulcie, when the time comes.’

She drew back with a pallid face and a hauteur that would have become Lady Fettercairn herself, while he in turn made her a low mock bow, and stalked tipsily off with what he thought a dignity of bearing, leaving her sick with terror of a future of insult and apprehension.

Somehow she felt at his mercy, and began to contemplate flight—but to where?

Watching closely, Lady Fettercairn observed the extreme caution and coldness of Dulcie's bearing to Shafto; but, not believing in it, or that a person in her dependent state could resist advances of any kind from one in his lofty position, supposed she had only to wait long enough and observe with care to find out if aught was wrong.

'But why wait?' said Lady Drumshoddy; 'why not dismiss the creature at once?' she added with asperity.

'How comes it that you are so intimate with this girl Carlyon?' said Lady Fettercairn one day.

'Your companion?' said Shafto.

'Yes.'

'How often have I told you that we are old friends—knew each other in Devonshire since we were a foot high.'

'But this intimacy now is—to say the least of it, Shafto—undignified.'

'I am sorry you think so.'

'Besides, she has a lover, I believe, whose likeness she wears in a locket; and though she may be content to throw him over for rank and wealth with you, surely you would not care to receive a second-hand affection.'

'How your tongue goes on, grandmother!' said Shafto, greatly irritated; 'you are like Finella's pad Fern when it gets the bit between its teeth.'

'Thank you! But this lover, or cousin, or whatever he is, of whom Miss Carlyon actually once spoke to me—who is he, and where is he?'

'How the deuce should I know!' exclaimed Shafto, growing pale; 'gone to the dogs, I suppose, as I always thought he would.'

'It was of him that madwoman spoke?'

'Yes, Madelon Galbraith. He was named Florian after his aunt.'

'Miss MacIan.'

'That was enough for Lady Fettercairn, who, dropping that subject, returned with true feminine persistence to the other.

'I don't like this sort of thing, I repeat, Shafto.'

'What sort of thing?'

‘This secret flirting with my companion, Miss Carlyon.’

‘I don’t flirt with her ; and, by Jove, he’d be a pretty clever fellow who could do so.’

‘Why?’

‘She is so devilish stand-off, grandmother.’

‘I am truly glad to hear it.’

‘But can’t I talk with her? We are old acquaintances, and have naturally much to say to each other.’

‘Too much, I fear. You may talk, as you say, but not hover about her.’

‘Anything more?’ asked Shafto rudely.

‘Yes, I wish you to settle down——’

‘Oh! and marry Finella?’

‘Yes, that you know well, dear Shafto,’ said the lady coaxingly.

‘Oh, by Jove! that is easier said than done. You don’t know all the outs and ins of Finella ; and one can’t walk the course, so far as I can see.’

Shafto withdrew, but not before he saw the lace-edged handkerchief come into use, to hide the tears she did not shed at the brusque manner of her ‘grandson,’ who had failed to convince her, for she said to herself bitterly :

‘There is a curse upon Craigengowan ! Our youngest son threw himself and his life away upon a beggarly governess ; and now our only grandson seems likely to play the same game with my upstart companion ! I *do* like the girl, but, however, I must get rid of her.’

---

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### WITH THE SECOND DIVISION.

MEANWHILE the events of the war were treading thick on each other in Zululand. A fresh disaster had ensued at the Intombe River, where a detachment of the 80th Regiment was cut to pieces, and again old soldiers spoke with sorrow and disgust of the blunders and incapacity of those at head-quarters, who by



then new-fangled systems had reduced our once grand army to chaos.

Such alarms and surprises, like too many of the disasters and disgraces which befell our arms in these latter wars, were entirely due to the new formation of our battalions. 'That the destruction of the regimental system by Lord Cardwell has been the original cause of all our reverses, surprises, and humiliation, there can be little hesitation in saying,' to quote Major Ashe. 'The men at Isandhlwana were not well handled, it must be admitted, but it has since leaked out that many of them would not rally round their officers, but attempted safety in flight. Dozens of the men, sergeants, and other non-commissioned officers, have since disclosed that they did not know the names of their company officers, or those of their right or left-hand men.'

Hence, by the new-fangled system, there could be neither confidence nor cohesion. Elsewhere he tells us that the once splendid 91st Highlanders, 'the envy of all recruiting sergeants, could only muster 200 men when ordered to Zululand,' but was made up by volunteers from other regiments—men all strangers to each other and to their officers, and whose facings were all the colours of the rainbow. Then, after the Intombe, followed the storming of the Inhlobane Mountain, where fell the gallant Colonel Weatherly, and the no less gallant old frontier farmer Pict Nys, who was last seen fighting to his final gasp against a horde of Zulus, across the dead body of his favourite horse, an empty revolver in his left hand, a blood-dripping sabre in his right, and more than one assegai, launched from a distance, quivering in his body.

The cry went to Britain now for more troops; and fresh reinforcements came, while the army in Zululand was reconstituted by Lord Chelmsford at Durban.

There, amid a brilliant staff in their new uniforms fresh from home, was one central figure, the ill-starred Prince Imperial of France, who had landed two days after the battle of Kambula, and had been appointed an extra aide-de-camp to the general commanding.

The army was now formed into two divisions: one under Major-General Crealock, C.B., and another under Major-General Newdigate, while a flying column under Sir Evelyn Wood was to act independently. Hammersley's squadron of Mounted Infantry was attached to the Second Division, with the movements of which our story has necessarily alone to do.

The 16th of April saw it marching northward of Natal, and on the 4th of May Lord Chelmsford, who had joined it after church parade—for the day was Sunday—suggested that a reconnaissance should be made towards the Valley of the Umvolosi River to select ground for an entrenched camp, and for this purpose Hammersley's squadron and Buller's Horse were ordered to the front.

The local troopers under that brilliant officer were now clad in a uniform manner—in brown cord breeches, mimosa-coloured jackets, long gaiters laced to the knee, and broad cavalier hats, with long scarlet or blue puggarees. The open collars of their flannel shirts displayed their bronzed necks; and picturesque-looking fellows they were, all armed with sabres and rifles of various patterns, slung across the back by a broad leather sling. Their horses were rough but serviceable, and active as mountain deer.

After riding some miles over grassy plateaux and rugged hilly ground, tufted with cabbage-tree wood, on a bright and pleasant morning, the local Horse were signalled to retire, as it was discovered that a great body of Zulus were watching their movements.

Unaware of this, Hammersley, with his Mounted Infantry, rode on for three miles, till they reached a great plateau near a place called Zungen Nek, where the pathway, if such it could be styled, was bordered by mimosa-thorns, and where two bullets, mysteriously fired—no one could tell from where, for no enemy was to be seen—whistled through the little squadron harmlessly, though both were as close to Florian as they could pass without hitting him, and one made Tattoo toss his head and lay his quivering little ears angrily back on his neck.

At this time some officers who had cantered to the front

from where the division was halted, saw the dark figures of many of the enemy creeping along in the jungle, and watching them so intently that they were all unaware of their retreat being cut off by twenty of the Mounted Infantry under a sergeant—Florian.

‘Forward, and at them!’ cried the latter, as his men slung their rifles and galloped in loose formation, sabre in hand, to attack the savages, but suddenly found themselves on the edge of some precipitous cliffs, some three hundred feet in height, which compelled them for a moment or two to rein up till a narrow track was found, down which they descended in single file in a scrambling way, the hoofs of the rear horses throwing sand, gravel, and stones over those in front.

When the sounds made by the descent ceased, and the soldiers gained a turfy plateau, nothing could be seen of the foe, and all was silence—a silence that could be felt, like the darkness that rested on the land of Egypt. Then there burst forth a united yell that seemed to rend the welkin, and a vast horde of black-skinned Zulus, led by Methagazulu (the son of Sirayo), who had recovered from the wound he received at Ginghamlovo, came rushing on, brandishing their assegais and rifles.

This ambushade was more than Florian anticipated, and believing that all was lost, and that he and his party would be utterly cut off to a man, he gave the order to retire on the spur, and they splashed, girdle deep, through a ford of the Umvolosi, on which, as if by the guidance of Heaven, they chanced to hit.

With yells of baffled rage the savages followed them so closely that Florian and another trooper named Tom Tyrrell, who covered the rear, had to face about and fire by turns, till the open ground on the other side was reached.

‘A close shave that business,’ said Tom breathlessly. ‘I thought that in three minutes’ time every man Jack of us would have been assegaided.’

Galloping out of range, Florian’s party now rejoined that of Hammersley, who congratulated them on their escape,



and they all rode together back to head-quarters. But these movements had alarmed the whole valley of the White Umvolosi.

On every hand, in quick succession, signal-fires, formed of vast heaps of dried grass, blazed on the hill-tops ; vast columns of black smoke shot upwards to the bright blue sky, and were repeated from summit to summit, showing that the whole country was actively alive with armed warriors, who in many places could be seen driving and goading their herds of cattle into rocky kloofs and all kinds of places inaccessible to horse and foot alike.

From the summit of the Zungen Nek a full view of the beautiful valley through which the Umvolosi rolls could be obtained, and near a place there, called Conference Hill, were seen, like a field of snow, the white tents of the Second Division shining in the bright, sunny light.

Twenty-three days it remained encamped there, and during that time a vast amount of useful information regarding the topography of the country in which the coming campaign would be, was furnished by the reports made by Colonel Buller, the Prince Imperial, by Hammersley, and even by Florian, who was a very clever draughtsman, and on many occasions was complimented by the staff in such terms as made his young heart swell in his breast.

But the sketches of none surpassed those of the handsome and unfortunate Prince, whose passion for information was boundless, and the questions he was wont to ask of all were searching in the extreme.

One day, when out on a reconnaissance, the Mounted Infantry were suddenly fired upon from a kraal, and in the conflict that ensued many were killed and wounded, especially of the enemy, who were completely routed.

The great and unfathomable mystery of death was close indeed to Florian on that day, and around him lay hundreds who had discovered it within an hour or less. He had narrowly escaped it by skilfully dodging a ponderous knobkerie flung at his head as the last dying effort of a warrior whose black and

naked breast had been pierced by a bullet from Tom Tyrrell's rifle, and from which the crimson blood was welling as if from a squirt ; and so close was the weapon to doing Florian a mortal mischief, that it took the gilt spike close off the top of his helmet.

And now, on the very evening before the division broke up its camp and marched, occurred an event which proved to Florian, and to his favourite captain too, the chief one of the campaign.

How little those who live at home at ease can know of the delight it gives an exile to have tidings, by letter or otherwise, from those who are dear to them in the old country when far, far away from it ! No matter how short the sentences, how few the facts, or how clumsy the expressions, they all seem to show that we are not forgotten by the old fireside ; for even amid the keen and fierce excitement of war the soldier has often time for much thought of friends and home, especially in the lonely watches of the night, and a pang goes to his heart with the fear that, as he is absent, he may be forgotten.

Florian had often envied the delight with which his comrades, Tom Tyrrell or poor Bob Edgehill, who perished at Isandhlwana, and others received letters from distant friends and relatives ; but month after month had passed, and none ever came to him, nor did he expect any.

In all the world there was no one to think of him save Dulcie Carlyon. How he longed to write to her, but he knew not where she was !

At last there came an evening—he never forgot it—when the sergeant who acted as regimental postman brought him a letter—a letter addressed to himself, and in the hand-writing of Dulcie !

His fingers trembled as he carefully but hastily cut open the envelope. It was dated from Craigengowan, a place of which he scarcely knew the name, but thought he had heard it mentioned by Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw on the eventful day when he and Shafto visited that gentleman at his office.

After many prettily expressed protestations of regard for him-

self—every word of which stirred his heart deeply—of joy that he was winning distinction, and of fear for the awful risks he ran in war, she informed him that the situation obtained for her had been that of companion to Lady Fettercairn—‘and who do you think I found installed here as master of the whole situation, as heir to the title and a truly magnificent property—Shafto! Perhaps I am wrong to tell you, lest it may worry you, but he has resumed his persecution of me. He often taunts me about you, and fills me with terror lest he may do me a mischief with Lady Fettercairn, as he has already contrived to do with his cousin, Miss Finella (a dear, darling girl) and Captain Hammersley, the officer whose life you so bravely saved at Ginghilovo, and who, I now learn, is in your regiment. It was an infamous trick, but it succeeded in separating them and nearly breaking Finella’s heart.’

The letter then proceeded to detail how Finella, to her extreme dismay and discomfiture, had dropped Hammersley’s pencilled note; how Shafto had found it, and intercepted her in the shrubbery on her way to the place of rendezvous, and would only restore it on receiving, as a bribe, a cousinly kiss, which she was compelled to accord, when he rudely seized her and snatched several before she could repulse him; how Hammersley had passed at that fatal moment, and misconceived the whole situation, since when, language could not express the loathing Finella had of Shafto. That was the whole affair.

‘You know Shafto and all of which he is capable,’ continued Dulcie; ‘so poor Finella is heartbroken in contemplating the horrid view her lover must take of her, but is without the means of explaining it away, nor will her great pride permit her to do so.’

Dulcie under the same roof with Shafto, and apparently the bosom friend of Hammersley’s love! Florian had now a clue to some of the bitter remarks that, in moments of unintentional confidence, his superior had uttered from time to time.

That Shafto and Dulcie were in such close proximity to each other—meeting daily and hourly—filled Florian’s mind with no small anxiety. He had no doubt of Dulcie’s faith, trust, and



purity; but neither had he any doubt of Shafto's subtle character and the mischief of which he was capable, and which he might work the helpless and unfortunate girl if he pursued, as she admitted he did, the odious and unwelcome love-making he had begun at Revelstoke.

As he read and re-read her letter in that hot, burning, and far-away land, how vividly every expression of her perfect face, every inflection of her soft and sympathetic voice, came back to memory, till his heart swelled and his eyes grew dim. How self-possessed she was, with all her gentleness; how self-reliant, with all her timidity!

'Should I show this letter to Hammersley?' thought Florian. 'The communication in it must concern him very closely—very dearly, and my darling, impulsive little Dulcie has evidently written it with a purpose.'

Then Florian remembered that, though suave and condescendingly kind to him, especially since the episode of Ginghamlovo, Hammersley was naturally a man of a proud and haughty spirit, and might resent one in Florian's junior position interfering with the most tender secrets of his life.

Florian was keenly desirous of fulfilling what was evidently the wish of Dulcie—of befriending her friend, and perhaps, by achieving a reconciliation, conferring an unexampled favour upon his officer; yet he shrank from the delicate task, while giving it long and anxious thought.

He tossed up a florin.

'If it is a head, I'll do it. Head it is!' he exclaimed, and went straight to the tent of Hammersley, whom he found lounging on his camp-bed, with a cigar in his mouth and his patrol-jacket open.

'What is up?' he demanded abruptly, as if disturbed in a reverie.

'Only, sir, that I have just had a letter,' began Florian, colouring deeply, and pausing.

'From home?'

'Yes, sir.'

'I hope it contains pleasant news.'

‘It is from one who is very dear to me.’

‘Oh, the old story—a girl, no doubt?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘The more fool you : the faith of the sex is writ in water, as the poet has it.’

‘I hope not, in my case and in some others, Captain Hammersley ; but if you will pardon me, I cannot help stating that in my letter there is something that concerns yourself and your happiness very nearly indeed.’

Hammersley stared at this information.

‘Concerns me?’ he asked.

‘Yes, and Miss Finella Melfort : permit me to mention her name.’

The red blood suffused Hammersley’s bronzed face from temples to chin, and he sprang to his feet.

‘What the devil *do* you mean, MacIan?’ he exclaimed sharply ; his supreme astonishment, however, exceeding any indignation to hear that name on a stranger’s lips. ‘I know well that you are not what you seem by your present position in life ; but how came you to know the name of that young lady?’

‘She is mentioned in this letter, sir—the letter of the only being in all the world who cares for me,’ replied Florian, with a palpable break in his voice.

‘Mentioned in what fashion?’ asked Hammersley curtly and with knitted brows.

‘Please to read this paragraph for yourself, sir.’

‘Thanks.’

Hammersley took the letter, and saw that it was written in a most lady-like hand.

‘Dulcie?’ said he, just glancing at the signature ; ‘is she your sister?’

‘I have no sister. I think I have told you that I am alone in the world.’

‘I have a delicacy in reading a young lady’s letter,’ said Hammersley, whose hand shook on perceiving by the next glance that it was dated from ‘Craigengowan.’

Florian indicated the long paragraph with a finger ; and as Hammersley read it his face became again deeply suffused.

‘Permit me again, my good fellow,’ said he as he read it twice, as if to impress its contents on his mind ; and then, returning the letter with unsteady hand to Florian, he seated himself on the edge of the camp-bed and passed a hand across his forehead.

‘Thank you for showing me this ! You can understand what I felt and thought on seeing the episode this young lady explains so kindly in her letter—God bless the girl ! It seems all too good to be true.’

‘You do not know the vile trickery of which this fellow Shafto is capable,’ said Florian.

‘I do,’ replied Hammersley, remembering the affair of the cards. ‘Finella !’ said he, as if to himself, ‘how her memory haunts me ! By Jove, she is a witch, a sorceress !—like that other Finella after whom she told me she was named, and who lived—I don’t know when—in the year of the Flood, I think. I thank you from my soul, MacIan, for the sight of this letter, and it will be a further incitement to me to further your interests in every way within my power. Heaven knows how gladly I would betake me to my pen ; but this is no time for letter-writing. By daybreak we shall be in our saddles, and on the spur to the front.’

Florian saluted his officer and withdrew, leaving him to the full tide of his new thoughts.

So she was true to him after all ! The whole affair, so black apparently, seemed to be so simple and truthfully explained away by Dulcie’s letter that he could not doubt the terrible misconception under which he had laboured, nor did he wish to do so. The tables were completely turned.

It was he—himself—who had cruelly wronged, doubted, upbraided, and quitted Finella, and now from him must the reparation come. His mind was full of the repentant, glowing, and gushing letter he would write to her, renewing his protestations of love and faith, and imploring her to forgive him ; but when could that letter be written and sent to the rear ?—for



the division advanced by dawn on the morrow, and there would scarcely be a halt, he supposed, till it reached Ulundi.

And how could a letter reach her from the Cape at Craigen-gowan unknown to Lady Fettercairn?—who, he knew but too well, was bitterly opposed to his love for Finella, and for many cogent reasons the adherent of Shafto.

How would it all end with them both now?

In a runaway marriage too probably, unless he got knocked on the head in Zululand, a process he rather shrank from now, as life seemed to be invested with new attributes, greater hopes, and greater value.

Finella's *mignonne* face came before him : the small, straight nose, with thin, arched nostrils; the proud yet soft hazel eyes, with thin, long lashes, the firm coral lips; the abundant hair of richest brown; and with all these came, too, the memory of her favourite perfume, the faint odour of jasmine that clung to her draperies and laces.

In a similar mood to some extent, but without the sense of having aught to explain or a reparation to make, Florian lay in another tent at some little distance, contemplating the contents of a pretty white leather toy, lined with pale blue satin—a case containing a photo—altogether an unsuitable thing for the pocket of a soldier's tunic, or to place in his haversack, it may be among cooked rations, shoe-brushes, and a sponge for pipeclay; but it contained a poor reflection, though delicately tinted, of Dulcie's own sweet face.

He continued by turns to re-read her letter and contemplate her photo till the daylight faded and the moon, golden not silver coloured, shone amid a sky wherein dark blue seemed to blend with apple green at the horizon, lighting up all the lonely landscape, and making the blue gum-trees and euphorbiæ stand out in opaque *silhouette*, while the—to him—new constellations of that southern hemisphere seemed to play hide-and-seek, as they sparkled in and out in the cloudless dome of heaven.

As there he lay, full of his own thoughts and tender memories, he was all unaware of two evil spirits that hovered near, and

were actually watching him. Both were evil-visaged personages, and though clad in the ordinary costume of Cape Colonists, belonged to the Natal Volunteer Force.

One had two hideous bullet wounds but lately healed—one on each cheek—and his jaws were almost destitute of teeth, as Florian's pistol had left them; but this personage was no other than Josh Jarrett, the ex-landlord of the so-called hotel at Elandsbergen; and the other was Dick of the Droogveldt—one of the two ruffians that had pursued Florian on horseback till his fall into the bushy donga concealed him from them.

On the destruction of the town of Elandsbergen by the Zulus these two worthies, for the sake of the ample pay given to the Colonial troops, and being incapable of obtaining any other means of livelihood, had joined the Volunteer Horse, and while serving in that capacity had discovered and recognised Florian.

'He's a boss now in the Mounted Infantry; but I'll be cursed if I don't put a lead plug into him on the first opportunity—kill him as I would a puff-adder!' said Josh Jarrett fiercely, as he mumbled the last words into the mouth of a metal flask filled with that villainous compound known as Cape smoke, while they grinned, but without fun, and winked to each other portentously.

'Hopportunities we'll 'ave in plenty, with the work as goes on here,' responded Dick of the Droogveldt (which means a dry district), 'and that cursed fellow shall never quit Zululand alive, all the more so that they say he is to be made an officer soon.'

For Dick, like Josh, was one of 'Cardwell's recruits,' as they are named, and had been a deserter from a line regiment. So their appearance in camp probably accounted for the two mysterious shots that Florian had so recently escaped.\*

---

\* For many interesting details of the Zulu War, I am indebted to the narrative of Major Ashe; but more particularly to the Private Journal of the Chief of the Staff.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## ON THE BANKS OF THE ITYOTYOSI.

IT was bitterly cold in camp that night—one of the *noctes ambrosianæ* in Zululand, as Hammersley said laughingly ; and on the morning of the 1st June, when the thin ice stood in the buckets inside the tents, the latter were struck, and the Second Division began its march from the Blood River towards the Itelezi Hill.

‘My darling little Finella—may God love you and bless you!’ was the morning prayer of Hammersley, as he sprang on his horse, and the squadron of Mounted Infantry went cantering forward ; prior to which, Florian, after fraternally sharing a ration biscuit with Tattoo—while the animal whinnied and rubbed his velvet nose against his cheek, as if thanking him therefor—kissed him quite as tenderly as Finella ever did Fern ; for a genuine trooper has a true affection for his horse.

As the squadron rode on in advance of the column, Hammersley beckoned Florian to his side, and, as they trotted on together, he asked him many a kindly question about Dulcie Carlyon, of his past life and future hopes and wishes, betraying a genuine interest which touched Florian keenly.

In due time the Itelezi Hill, a long mass, the brown sides of which were scored by rocky ravines and woody kloofs, the lurking-places of many Zulus, who acted as spies along the border, was reached ; and now, on the bank of the Ityotyosi River, at a short distance from the Natal frontier, a halt was made, and another temporary camp formed on ground selected by the Prince Imperial of France, who had previously examined it.

In advance of the whole force on the same morning, the Prince had ridden on with instructions to examine the nature of the ground through which the march would lie ; and with an emotion of deep interest, for which he could not account,



Florian saw him ride off at full speed, accompanied by Lieutenant Carey, of the 98th Regiment, the Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General, with six of Captain Bettington's European Horse; and pushing on over the open and pastoral country, the Prince and his party soon disappeared in the vicinity of the Itelezi Hill, which he reached about ten a.m.

On the same day Sir Evelyn Wood—with orders to keep one day's march in front of the Second Division—was reconnoitring in advance of his flying column, when the halt was made by the Ityotyosi River, where despatches from the rear overtook the staff, and a few minutes after, the General sent his orderly for Florian, whom he found carefully grooming and rubbing down Tattoo.

Though ignorant of having committed any *faux pas*, Florian's first idea was that he had fallen into a scrape, and with some trepidation of spirit and manner found himself before the General, who, wearing a braided patrol-jacket and a white helmet girt by a puggaree, was examining the country through a field-glass.

'Sergeant,' said he, holding forth his hand, 'I have to congratulate you.'

'On what, sir?' asked Florian.

'Your appointment to a second-lieutenancy in your regiment, as the reward of your disinterested bravery at Ginghamlovo, and general conduct on all occasions. It is duly notified in the *Gazette*, and here is the letter of the Adjutant-General.'

Florian's breath was quite taken away by this intelligence. For a few moments he could scarcely realise the truth of what the General, with great kindness and interest of manner, had said to him. He felt like one in a dream, from which he might awaken to disappointment; and the white tents of the camp, the Ityotyosi that flowed beside them, the woods and distant hills, seemed to be careering round him, and it was only when after a little time he felt the firm grasp of Hammersley's hand, and heard the warm and hearty congratulations from him and other officers, that he felt himself now indeed to be one of them.

The first to accord him a 'a salute as Second Lieutenant' (a rank since then abolished) was Tom Tyrrell.

'Let me shake your hand for the last time, sir, as your comrade,' said he.

'Not for the last time, I hope, Tom,' replied Florian, whose thoughts were flashing home to Dulcie, and all she would feel and think and say.

An officer—he was already an officer! As his father—or he whom he had so long deemed his father—was before him. His foot was firmly planted on the ladder now, and with the thought of Dulcie's joy his own redoubled.

'Come to the mess-tent,' said Hammersley. 'We must wet the commission and drink the health of the Queen after tiffin.'

For the first time on that auspicious afternoon Florian found himself among his equals, and the kindness with which they welcomed him to their circle made his affectionate and appreciative heart swell. Hammersley was President of the Mess Committee, and was a wonderful strategist in the matter of 'providing grub,' as he said.

A few rough boards that went with the baggage formed the table, and at 'tiffin' that day the *menu* comprised vegetable soup, a sirloin of beef, an *entrée* or two, for a wonder, with plenty of brandy-pawnee and 'square-face'; and what the repast lacked in delicacy and splendour was amply make up by the general jollity and good-humour that pervaded the board, though, for all they knew, another hour might find them face to face with the enemy.

Would either Hammersley or Florian be spared to write to the girl he loved?

In the case of Florian it seemed somewhat impossible, especially now, when he had—all unknown to himself—two secret and unscrupulous enemies on his trail, and intent on his destruction.

Meanwhile a terrible tragedy, that was to form a part of the world's history, was being acted not very far off from where that jocund circle sat round the board presided over by Hammersley.

Sir Evelyn Wood, we have said, was reconnoitring in advance of his column, which was then on the march from Munhla Hill towards the Ityotyosi River. Scattered in extended order among the growing undulations and watercourses, the Horse of Redvers Buller were scouting.

Rain had fallen during the night, but the sky of the afternoon was clear, bright, and without a cloud, from the far horizon to the zenith.

Following, but at a distance, the line taken by the Prince Imperial and his six reconnoitring troopers, General Wood, after issuing from a dense coppice of thorn trees, interspersed with graceful date palms and enormous feathery bamboo canes, came suddenly on a deep and smooth tributary of the Ityotyosi, and after contriving to ford it at a place where its banks were fringed by beautiful acacias and drooping palms with fan-shaped leaves, to his astonishment some mounted men appeared in his front, and all apparently fugitives.

With twelve of his troopers, the fearless Buller, who had seen them also, now came galloping up and rode on with Sir Evelyn, and in rounding the base of a tall cliff they came suddenly upon Lieutenant Carey, of the 98th Foot, and four troopers of Bettington's Corps, all riding at a furious pace, their horses flecked with white foam, and with sides bloody by the goring spurs.

They reined up pale and breathlessly, and in another minute or two their terrible secret was told.

'Where is the Prince Imperial?' cried Sir Evelyn, as he rushed his horse over some fallen trees in his haste to meet the fugitives.

But Carey, who seemed as dead beat as his horse, was at first apparently incapable of replying.

'Speak, sir!' cried the General, impetuously. 'What has happened?'

Still Carey seemed incapable of speech.

'Sir,' said one of the troopers, 'the Prince, I fear, is killed.'

The speaker was Private Le Toque, a Frenchman.



‘Is that the case? Tell me instantly, sir!’ resumed the General, with growing excitement.

‘I fear it is so,’ faltered Carey, in a low voice.

‘Then *what are you doing here, sir?*’

A veil must be drawn over the rest of the interview, which was of a most painful character, wrote Major Ashe in his narrative of the occurrence.

A soldier—Tom Tyrrell, encouraged by the knowledge that his late comrade Florian was there—came rushing into the mess-tent, where Florian, with those who were now his brother-officers, was seated in happiness and jollity, bearing the terrible tidings, which spread through the camp like wildfire, and all who had horses mounted and rode forth to discover if they were true, and all spoke sternly and reprehensively of the luckless Lieutenant Carey, who eventually was tried by a court-martial, and died two years after in India, some said of a broken heart.

As Florian was one of the searchers for the slain Prince, the story of this latter’s tragic death does not lie apart from ours.

It would seem, briefly, then, that the charger ridden by the Prince when he left Lord Chelmsford’s camp, and which in the end chiefly led to his death, was a clumsy and awkward animal, given to rearing and shying. After crossing the Ityotyosi, then swollen by the recent rains, the Prince and his party rode on through a district covered with the grass-like rush, kreupelboom, and dwarf acacias.

The Prince, who from the time of his landing had always sought out any Frenchmen who might be among the local levies, and frequently gave them sovereigns, was riding with Le Toque by his side; and the latter, in the gaiety of his heart, and exhilarated by the beauty of the morning, sang more than one French song as they rode onward, such as—

*‘Eh gai, gai, gai, mon officier!’*

And as they began to ascend a still nameless hill with a flat top, the Prince sang loudly: ‘Les deux Grenadiers,’ an old

Bonapartist ditty—Le Toque joining in the chorus of Béranger's chanson :—

‘Vieux grenadiers, suivons un vieux soldat,  
Suivons un vieux soldat !  
Suivons un vieux soldat !  
Suivons un vieux soldat !’

On the summit of the koppie the party slackened their girths, while the Prince made a sketch of the landscape. ‘We may here digress to say,’ adds the *Cape Argus*, ‘that the Prince’s talent with pen and pencil, combined with his remarkable proficiency in military surveying (which so distinguished the first Napoleon), made his contributions to our knowledge of the country to be traversed of great value.’

Amid the heat and splendour of an African noon they now rode on to a deserted kraal, consisting of five beehive-shaped huts, near a dry donga, or old watercourse, where they unsaddled and knee-haltered their horses to graze, while the Prince and his companions chatted and smoked, all unaware that some forty armed Zulus were actually stalking them like deer, crawling stealthily and softly on their hands and knees through the long Tambookie grass and mealies, drawing their rifles and assegais after them.

About four o’clock Corporal Grub, of Bettington’s Horse, got a glimpse of a Zulu, and warned the Prince of the circumstance.

‘Saddle up at once !’ said the latter ; ‘prepare to mount !’

The brief orders had scarcely left his lips when a volley from forty rifles crashed through the long Tambookie grass and waving reeds, which bent as if before a breeze, and then the ferocious lurkers rushed with flashing and glistening teeth, bloodshot, rolling eyes, and loud yells, upon the solitary party of eight men.

Terrified by the sudden tumult, all the horses swerved wildly round ; a trooper named Rogers was shot dead with his left foot in the stirrup, and those who actually got into their saddles found it impossible to control their horses, so terrific were the

yells, mingled with ragged shots, and they bore their riders across the open karoo and towards the deep and dangerous donga.

Prince Napoleon's horse, a difficult one to mount at all times, and sixteen hands high, resisted every attempt at remounting in its then state of terror ; thus one by one the party rode or were borne away, while the unhappy Prince endeavoured to vault into his saddle.

'*Mon Prince, dépêchez-vous, s'il vous plaît !*' cried his countryman trooper, Le Toque, as he rushed past, lying across but not in his saddle, and then the heir of France found himself alone—alone and face to face with more than forty merciless and pitiless savages !

Who can tell what may have flashed through the brave lad's mind in that moment of fierce excitement and supreme mental agony—what thoughts of France and Imperial glory—the glorious past, the dim future, and, more than all, no doubt, of the lonely mother, who was so soon to weep for him at Chiselhurst—to weep the tears that no condolence could quench !

When last seen by Le Toque, as the latter gave a backward and despairing glance, he was grasping a stirrup-leather in vain attempts to mount the maddened animal, which trod upon him, and broke away when the strap parted ; and then, for a moment, the young Napoleon covered his face with his hands—deserted, abandoned to an awful death, which no Christian eye was then to see.

All the obloquy of this tragedy was now heaped upon Lieutenant Carey, a native of the south of England. It was dark night when he got to head-quarters, and at that time nothing could be done to ascertain the fate of the deserted one.

Scarcely a man slept in our camp by the Ityotyosi River, and after 'lights out' had been sounded by the bugles, the soldiers could talk of nothing else but the poor Prince Imperial.

'The news of his death,' wrote an officer who was in camp, 'fell like a thunderbolt on all. At first it was regarded as one of those reports that so often went round. Bit by bit, however, it assumed a form. Even then people were incredulous,



only half believing the dreadful tale. The two questions first asked were—What will they say at home? and, secondly, the poor Empress? All was wildest excitement, and brave men absolutely broke down under the blow. To them it looked a black and bitter disgrace. The chivalrous young Prince, repaying the hospitality shown him by England with his sword—entrusted to us by his widowed mother—to have been killed in a mere paltry reconnaissance! to have fallen without all his escort having been killed first! to lie there dead and alone! Many there were who would have given up life to have been lying with him, so that our British honour might have been kept sacred.'

---

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### FINDING THE BODY.

'FALL in, the Mounted Infantry!' cried the voice of Hammersley, when with earliest dawn strong parties were detailed from the camps of the Second Division and Sir Evelyn Wood to scout the scene of the tragedy; and as his squadron rode forth in the grey light with rifle-butt resting on the thigh, just as the dawn began to redden the summit of the Itelezi Hill, Florian remembered that this mournful search was his first duty as an officer; but the calamity clouded the joy of his promotion, and would be always associated with it.

He felt himself again the equal of Dulcie Carlyon; but, still, to what end? He could not go home to her, nor could she come there to him, a combatant in Zululand; besides, he knew well enough that an officer's pay, unless when on service, is not sufficient for himself without the encumbrance of a wife; and with this enforced practical view of the situation he could only sigh as he rode on and thought of poor Dulcie.

As some of the Volunteer Horse went to the front, Florian became conscious that two, wearing huge, battered hats, who rode together, were regarding him furtively, and with a curiously

hostile and scowling expression ; and his heart gave a kind of leap when he recognised in these, two of the ruffians whose odious features were indelibly impressed upon his memory by the adventures of that horrible night in the so-called hotel at Elandsbergen—Josh Jarrett and Dick of the Droogveldt, with his short, thickset figure, small, dull eyes, and heavy, bull-dog visage.

That they would work him some mischief, if possible, in their new capacity he never doubted ; and possibly enough it was their design to do so, secretly and securely, amid the often confused scouting and scampering to and fro of the Mounted Infantry among bush and cover of every kind. But, as they were then going to the front, he thought it unwise to move in the matter at the time ; besides, they might be knocked on the head, and all on the ground were thinking only of the Prince Imperial.

A deep silence hovered over the ranks of the various searching parties that rode round by the base of the flat-topped Itelezi Hill. The swallow-tailed banneroles of the 17th Lancers, who looked handsome and gay in their white helmets and blue tunics faced and lapelled with white, fluttered out on the morning wind ; but the iron hoofs of their horses fell without a sound on the soft and elastic turf of the green veldt. Occasionally a low murmur would be heard as the searchers drew nearer the fatal kraal, and the lance was slung and the carbine grasped instinctively when at times the black Kaffir vultures, hinting of a dreadful repast, rose from among the tall, feathery Tambookie grass, and, croaking angrily, winged their way aloft as if enraged and interrupted.

Driving out roughly by lance-point and rifle-bullet about a hundred Zulus from some holes and scrub, several of the Lancers under Lieutenant Frith, their adjutant, and the Mounted Infantry under Hammersley, next drew near the fatal donga, which some officers crossed on foot. Among those who were in advance of all the rest was Lieutenant Dundonald Cochrane, of the Cornish Light Infantry.

‘Look!’ cried Hammersley to Florian, as Cochrane was seen

to pause and with reverence take off his helmet. Then a hum went along the ranks of the searchers, who all knew what he had found.

And there, on the sloping bank of the donga in the evening sunshine, with his head pillowed on some sweet wild-flowers, nude as he came into the world, save that a reliquary and locket with his father's miniature were round his neck—supposed to be potent fetishes—lay the poor young Prince, the guest of Britain, the hope of Imperial France, and the only son of his mother, dead, and gashed by sixteen assegai wounds, among them the usual cruel Zulu *coup de grâce*—the gash in the stomach.

It was found that, though an accomplished swordsman, he had failed to use his sword—the sword of his father the Emperor—which had dropped from the scabbard in his attempts to mount; but that, seizing an assegai which had been hurled at him, he had defended himself till he sank under repeated wounds; and a tuft of human hair clenched in his left hand attested the valour and the desperation of his resistance.

His faithful little Scottish terrier was found dead by his side.

All around him the ground was trampled, torn, and stained by gouts of blood.

A bier was now formed by crossed lances of the 17th Lancers, covered by cut rushes and a cavalry cloak. Reverently and almost with womanly tenderness did our soldiers raise the body, and on this bier, so befitting to one of his name, Prince Napoleon was borne by loving hands by the rough and rugged track that led towards the hill of Itelezi; while all around the place where they had found him were flowers of gold and crimson tint, where in the gouts and pools of blood bright-winged moths and butterflies were battenning.

That the Prince was duly prepared to meet any fate that might befall him the remarkable prayer composed by him fully attests. It was found in his repositories, and was published in the papers of the time.

The entire Second Division was under arms to receive his remains when brought into the camp beside the river. The



body was borne through the lines on a gun-carriage, wrapped in linen and shrouded by a Union Jack; the funeral service was performed by the Catholic chaplain to the forces, and Lord Chelmsford acted as chief mourner. Though tolerably accustomed to bloodshed now, a profound impression of gloom pervaded the faces of the troops.

By mule-cart the body was sent to Pietermaritzburg, and in passing through Ladysmith there occurred a scene that was touching from its simplicity. This is a small village in the Division of Riversdale or Kannaland, where the body remained for the night at the entrance thereof, in the bleak open veldt, under a guard of honour; but from the school-house there came forth, and lined the roadway, a procession of little black children, who, to the accompaniment of an old cracked harmonium, sang a hymn, as the soldiers of the 58th Regiment took the body away, and sweetly and softly the voices of the little ones rose and fell on the chilly air of the morning.

‘This,’ says Captain Thomasson, of the Irregular Horse, in his narrative, ‘was but one mark of the feeling that all in the colony, whatever their age, colour, position, or sex, had at the sudden and terrible close of that bright young life. And it may safely be affirmed that not one disassociated in his mind from the thought of the dead son, the recollection of the blow awaiting the widowed mother.’

The next striking scene was at Durban, the only port in Natal Colony, where the troops handed over the remains to the blue-jackets of H.M.S. *Shah* for conveyance to England.

Here the poor old majordomo of the Prince was left behind. He was so inconsolable for the loss of his master, that it was feared he would lose his reason, and more than once he said, with simple truth and bitterness :

‘My master would not have abandoned one of them!’

---

## CHAPTER XL.

## THE SKIRMISH AT EUZANGONYAN.

THE transmission rearwards of the Prince's remains causing a day's delay in the advance of the division, Florian gladly availed himself of it to write to Dulcie a letter full of love and all the enthusiastic outpouring of his heart to one who was so far away ; to express his astonishment on learning that she was an inmate of the same house with Shafto, their *bête noire*, of whom she was to beware, he added impressively.

He told of his military success—of all that might be in store for them yet ; for Florian had, if small means at present, the vast riches of youth and hope to draw upon, especially in his brighter moments, and—if spared—his future promotion from the rank of second-lieutenant was now but a thing of time.

There had not been much brightness in his life latterly ; but it was impossible for him not to admit that the dawn of a happier day had come, and that he had made substantial progress in his profession.

He told her—among many other things—of Vivian Hammersley's friendship and favour for himself, even when in the rank and file, and of his pride and gratitude therefor ; of the change her letter to himself had made in Hammersley's views of Miss Melfort, for whom he sent an enclosure from the Captain, lest watchful eyes—perchance those of Shafto—might examine too closely the contents of the Craigengowan post-bag ; and from old experience they knew what the man was capable of—not respecting even 'the property of H.M. Postmaster-General.'

For, now that Florian was an officer, his friend Hammersley, though proud as Lucifer, and at times haughty to a degree, was, under the circumstances, not loth to avail himself of Dulcie's assistance in this matter, so necessary to his own happiness ; so the two missives in one were despatched, and with an emotion of thankfulness that was deep and genuine, Florian dropped

it into the regimental post-bag at the orderly-room tent, for conveyance with the mail to Durban.

The Second Division began its forward march on the 3rd of January, and encamped half a mile distant from the kraal near which the Prince Imperial had perished, while Sir Evelyn Wood's column, advancing by the left, proceeded along the further side of the Ityotyosi. Already the bad rations to which they were reduced—eight pounds of inferior oats and no hay—were telling severely on the horses of the 17th Lancers and Mounted Infantry.

On the 4th, when encamped on the bank of the Nondweni River, a cavalry patrol, under Redvers Buller, Hammersley, and others, had a narrow escape of being cut off by two thousand five hundred Zulus, of whom, on the following day, the entire cavalry column went forth in search.

When the whole mounted force was getting under arms, Hammersley threw away the end of a cigar before falling in, and said to Florian :

‘Look here, old fellow, I have been thinking about you. I am not a millionaire, you know, but I have enough and to spare. You have not, I presume—pardon me for saying so ; but now that you are an officer, and must want many things, my cheque-book is at your disposal, if you wish to draw on old Chink the Paymaster.’

‘A thousand thanks to you, Captain Hammersley,’ replied Florian, his heart swelling and his colour deepening with gratitude ; ‘but I have no need to trespass on your kindness—I want nothing here ; we are all pretty much alike in Zululand—officer and private, general and drum-boy.’

‘Yes, by Jove ! but in the time to come ?’

‘Thanks again, I say, dear Hammersley, but I am inclined to let to-morrow take care of to-morrow, especially while campaigning in Zululand.’

‘Tiresome work I find that, with all my zeal for the service,’ observed Hammersley, as the entire cavalry force moved off about four in the morning, when the sky and the landscape were alike dark. ‘We have much bodily endurance, and run



enormous risks which the people at home don't understand or fully appreciate, because our antagonists are naked savages, though second to no men in the world for reckless valour; thus honour may be accorded to us but scantily and grudgingly, because they *are* savages and not civilised enemies, or, as some one says of the days of the Great Duke, when so many thousand men in red coats and blue breeches met and beat so many thousand men in blue coats and red breeches.'

General Marshall, with the King's Dragoon Guards and 17th Lancers, had reconnoitred the country in advance as far as the Upoko River, and there effected a junction with Buller's command on the same ground where the latter had escaped the ambushade referred to.

On a green plain below it a great mass of Zulus, sombre and dark, spotted with the grey of their oval shields, were seen hovering, the flash of an assegai-head sparkling out at times when the sun arose; and near them, enveloped in smoke and all sheeted with flame at once, were some kraals that had been set on fire by the Irregular Horse; so the scene, if beautiful, was also a stirring one.

Above the vast mountain opposite, where the Upoko (a tributary of the great White Umvolosi, which flows towards the sea) was rolling in golden sheen between banks clothed with date palms, Kaffir plums, flowering acacias, and thornwood, the uprisen sun was shining in all his glory. The mountain was torn by ravines and studded with mimosa groups. On the left of the troops rose the vast Inhlatzatye, or mountain of greenstone, turned to crimson in the morning sun, its base clothed with lovely pasture, and twenty miles in its rear was known to be Ulundi, the great military kraal of Cetewayo, the chief object of the advance.

In the immediate foreground was the force of cavalry, with all their white helmets and sword-blades shining in the sun, the dark blue of the lancers, and the sombre uniforms of the Irregular Horse, relieved and varied by the bright scarlet of the King's Dragoon Guards and the mimosa-coloured tunics of the Mounted Infantry.

The sharp blare of the trumpets sounded the 'advance.'

'Buller's Horse to the left!' cried the officer of that name, digging spurs into his charger; 'Whalley's to the right! Frontier Light Horse and Hammersley's Mounted Infantry the centre!'

Uncovering to the flanks, the formation was made at a canter, and the forward movement began. During the morning Florian had more than once (till his men required his attention) an unpleasant sense of the presence of two secret enemies on the ground, which made him look frequently to where the oddly costumed volunteer troopers were advancing, and before that day's fighting was quite over he had bitter cause to know that both *were* in the field.

The 1st King's Dragoon Guards had been quartered in the same barracks with the regiment to which these two deserters belonged, and, feeling themselves now in hourly expectation of recognition by some of them, the camp of the Second Division had become perilous for the two desperadoes, and on that day they had resolved to 'levant,' but not before effecting their villainous purpose, if possible.

They knew well that by the rules of the service, at foreign stations, when there is no doubt as to the identity of a deserter, he is sent at once to his own corps to be dealt with there; moreover, they knew that the fact of their serving with the Volunteer Horse constituted another crime—that of fraudulent enlistment; and neither had any desire to be tied to the wheel of a field-piece and flogged as an example to others, for that punishment had not been quite abandoned yet.

While Colonel Buller's force was advancing, the Zulus had moved off by companies in singularly regular formation, and taken post in the rocky ravines at the base of the Euzangonyan Hill, which was covered with thick scrub and high feathery reeds, that swayed too and fro in the wind like a mighty cornfield.

After crossing the river, the Irregulars and Mounted Infantry at full speed advanced to within three hundred yards of the foe, and leaped from their saddles, with rifles unslung. The

horses were then led forward out of fire, or nearly so, by every third file, told off for that purpose.

Kneeling and creeping forward by turns, the fighting line opened a steady fire upon the partly concealed Zulus, whose dark figures were half seen, half hidden amid the smoke that eddied along the slopes of the hill, and this continued till the watchful Buller, who was surveying the position through a field-glass from the summit of a knoll, discovered from a flank movement that the Zulus had a large force in reserve, and, in a wily manner, were luring his troops on to destruction.

He ordered his bugle to sound the 'retire' and the whole to recross the river, but not before several men were killed or wounded, with fifteen horses placed *hors de combat*; then the Queen's cavalry were ordered to advance to the attack with lance and sword.

In his saddle, Florian watched them advance in imposing order, led by that *preux chevalier*, Drury Lowe, the hero of Zurapore, where the pursuit and the destruction of Tantia Topee were achieved in the Indian war. When Buller's scouting horse, skilled marksmen even from the saddle, and mounted on cattle nimble as antelopes, had partly failed, he could scarcely hope to achieve much with his heavy Lancers and still heavier Dragoon Guardsmen; but sending a troop of the latter to guard against any chance of the Zulus creeping down the bed of the river, he led three troops of Lancers close to the margin, where the marigold figs grew in profusion, and the yellow Kaffir melons, large as 40-pound shot, were floating in the current; and splashing through, he deployed them on some open ground beyond, full of that fiery confidence that there is nothing in war which the genuine dragoon cannot achieve.

'By Jove!' exclaimed Hammersley, 'but it is sad to see these splendid Lancers going in for this kind of work. It is hopeless for them to charge such a position, and attempt, at the lance's point, to ferret these savages out of their holes and dongas.'

From the Euzangonyan Hill the Zulus were now firing



heavily, but as their rifles were all wrongly sighted—if sighted at all—their bullets went high into the air. Between these and Lowe spread a mealie-field, which he believed to be full of other Zulus, and, resolved to let all who might be lurking there feel what the point of a lance is, he rode straight at it.

‘Trot—gallop—charge!’ sounded the trumpets; and with their horses’ manes and the banneroles of their levelled lances streaming backward on the wind, the 17th rushed on, sweeping through the tall, brown stalks of the dead mealies, but found no Zulus there.

When clear of the mealies, Lowe ordered some of the Lancers to dismount and open fire with their carbines on those Zulus who were lurking on the hill-slope among some thorn-trees, and there many were shot down, and their half-devoured and festering remains were found by our soldiers in the subsequent August.

After punishing them severely, the cavalry were recalled, but not before there were some casualties among the Lancers, whose adjutant, Lieutenant Frith—a favourite officer—was shot through the heart, and brought to camp dead across the saddle of his charger.

From fastnesses that were quite inaccessible to horsemen, the Zulus, covered by an undergrowth of prickly thorns and plants with enormous brown spiky leaves, continued to fire heavily, wreathing all the hill-side in white smoke, streaked with jets of fire; while another portion of them, yelling and running with the swiftness of hares, lined the bed of the river and opened a sputtering fusilade in flank, rendering the whole position of our cavalry most perilous.

‘Retire by alternate squadrons!’ was now the order for the cavalry, and beautifully and steadily was the movement executed.

‘Fours about—trot!’ came the order in succession from the leaders of the even and odd squadrons.

A front was thus kept to the Zulus, but the hope to lure them from their fastnesses by a movement they had never seen before, and to have a chance of attacking them in the open, proved vain; and upon broken and steep ground, on which it

would have been impossible for any cavalry force to assail them, they were seen swarming in vast black hordes round the flanks of the Euzangonyan Hill, and still maintaining a sputtering but distant though defiant fire, while the cavalry and other mounted men fell back towards their respective columns; and now it was that the calamitous outrage we have hinted at occurred.

When the cavalry began to fall back by alternate squadrons, it was remarked that two men of the Irregular Horse lingered at a considerable distance in the rear, still firing occasionally, as if they had not heard the sound of the trumpet to 'retire.'

'Those rash fools will get knocked on the head if they don't come back,' said Hammersley to Florian, as they were riding leisurely now at a little distance in rear of their men. 'They are nearly six hundred yards off. Well, we have not got even a scratch to-day,' he added, laughing, as he manipulated and proceeded to light a cigar; 'and now to get back to camp and have a deep drink of bitter beer. By Jove! I am thirsty as a bag of sand.'

'And I too,' said Florian.

Again the 'retire' was sounded, now by two trumpeters together, but without avail, apparently.

At that moment two rifle-shots came upon the speakers, delivered by the very men in question, and then they were seen to gallop at full speed, not after the retreating column, but at an angle towards the north-west, on perceiving that their shots had taken fatal effect; for Hammersley, struck by one, fell from his saddle on his face, and rolled over apparently in mortal agony, while Florian felt Tattoo give a kind of writhing bound under him and nearly topple over on his forehead till recovered by the use of spur and bridle-bit. Florian at once dismounted, for the horse was seriously wounded; but he could only give a despairing glance at his friend, if he meant to act decisively and avenge him.

'These scoundrels are deserters doubly—I know; follow me, men, we have not a moment to lose!' cried Florian, in a voice husky with rage, grief, and excitement, as he leaped upon poor Hammersley's horse; and with a section of four men, one of

whom was Tom Tyrrell, he spurred after them at full speed, without waiting for orders given or permission accorded.

If he was to act at all, there was no time for either.

He never doubted for a moment that they were Josh Jarrett and Dick of the Droogveldt, who were boldly attempting to escape in the face of the column after failing to shoot himself, and who had now fully a thousand yards start of him and his pursuing party.

---

## CHAPTER XLI.

### THE PURSUIT.

A NEW emotion—a hot thirst for blood—was in the heart of Florian now; his whole nature seemed to have undergone a sudden and temporary change; and to those who could have seen him his face would have been found deadly pale, and his dark eyes full of sombre fury.

The longing for retribution and destruction was keen in his mind at that time. Often he reined up the horse he rode to take a steady shot between the animal's quivering ears at one or other of the two desperadoes; but always missed them, and found that time was thus lost and the distance increased.

His present charger was not so steady as the old Cape nag, Tattoo, and Florian's hands, in the intensity of his excitement, trembled too much for his aim to be true; so the fugitives rode on and on, without firing a shot in return, thus showing that their ammunition had been expended, and they had nothing to hope for or trust to but a successful escape.

A cry left Florian's lips as the fugitives disappeared into a donga, and he thought he had lost them; but anon he saw them ascending the opposite slope at a rasping pace.

He could only think of the generous and chivalrous Vivian Hammersley, that good officer and noble Englishman, shot down thus in the pride of his manhood by the felon hand of



an assassin, whose bullet was meant for himself—Hamniersley, whose form stood with a kind of luminous atmosphere amid the dark surroundings that beset them both since he (Florian) had come as a soldier to Zululand; and then he thought of Dulcie's friend Finella, whom he only knew by name.

Poor girl! the next mail for Britain might bring sorrowful tidings to her, with the very letter his hand had so recently indited, full of hope and expressions of happiness.

Crossing by flying leaps the Umvutshini stream, a tributary of the greater Umvolosi, the pursuers and pursued traversed an undulating tract of country, scaring a great troop of the brindled gnu, which were grazing quietly there; anon a terrified herd of the koodoo—graceful antelopes, with magnificent spiral horns—swept past them, where the karroo shrubs and the silvery hair-grass and wild oats grew; elsewhere their horses' hoofs as they crushed or bruised the creeping fibrous roots of the Akerrania, shed a fragrance in the air.

The Umvolosi had now to be waded through near a rocky kop which towered on the right hand, and the opposite bank had to be scrambled up at a place where the tree-fern flourished thickly, and drooping date-palms overhung the water.

Next they had to cross a nameless tributary of the Upoko River, and then to skirt the base of the Mabenge Mountains (within two miles of Fort Newdigate), where, in some places, an odour, sickly and awful, loaded the evening air; and by experience they knew it came from the bodies of slain Zulus lying unburied, or covered only by their shields and a few loose stones.

In some places—one particularly—Florian and his companions found their progress almost arrested by spiky plants of giant size—the Doornboom, with its ox-horn-like prickles; for there are thickets of those through which even horses cannot pass—odious and terrible plants which tear the clothes to rags, and pierce the flesh to the bone; but they discovered two breaches through which the fugitives had passed, and forcing a passage, they rode onward again, and, in the fierce ardour of pursuit, Florian was all unconscious, till afterwards, how he and

his horse too were lacerated, scratched, and torn by the sharp spines as he rushed through them at full speed.

One of the fugitives had evidently found a cartridge, in a pocket perhaps, for he fired one shot rearward, in Parthian fashion, but fruitlessly, as it hit no one, and then he rode wildly but steadily on.

Believing that if ever he returned to camp it would only be to find his friend dying or dead, Florian, plunged in grief, maddened by rage and a thirst for dire vengeance, rode furiously yet silently on, closely followed by his four infantry men.

His horse—Hammersley's—was a fine English charger, and soon outstripped those of his comrades, who ere long began to drop rearward one after another, though Tom Tyrrell continued to head the rest; but after a time Florian found himself almost alone; thus it was fortunate for him that those he pursued were without ammunition.

Once or twice he lost sight of them, as dongas or eminences intervened, and then a low cry would escape him; but by the aid of his field-glass he 'spotted' them again, and gored his horse with the spurs anew.

Now broad before them lay the foaming Nondweni River, with the lion-shaped hill of Isandhlwana about seven miles distant, its rocky crest then reddened by the western sun, and Florian knew that now the pursuit had lasted for more than twenty miles from the Euzangonyan Hill.

Here the assassins reined up, and seemed to confer for a moment or two, as if in evident confusion and dismay. To remain was to die, and to attempt to cross the river would end in death by drowning, it was so deep and swift, red and swollen by recent storms of such rain as falls in the tropics only.

Florian dismounted now, dropped a fresh cartridge into the breech-block of the rifle he still carried, and just as he threw the bridle over his arm, Tom Tyrrell came tearing up and also leaped from his saddle, prepared to fire at four hundred yards range.

The two fugitives plunged into the water, where trees,

branches, cartloads of enormous leaves and yellow pumpkins were being swept past, and strove to make their horses breast the stream by turning them partly at an angle to the current. More than once the animals snorted with fear, throwing up their heads wildly as their haunches went down under the weight of their riders.

Tyrrell fired and shot one in mid-stream ; he threw up his hands in agony or despair, and fell on the mane of his horse, which, with himself, was swept round a rocky angle and disappeared.

The other had gained footing on the opposite bank, but at that moment Florian planted a rifle bullet between his shoulders.

Sharply rang the report of the rifle, and a shriek mingled with the rush of the world of waters as the deserter and assassin fell backward over the crupper of his struggling horse, which gained the land, while his rider sank to rise no more just as the last red rays of the sun died out on the stern hill-tops, and in its rush the river seemed to sweep past with a mightier sound than ever.

*Which* of the two he had shot in the twilight Florian knew not, nor did he care ; suffice it that he and Tom Tyrrell 'had polished them off,' as the latter said, and thereupon proceeded to light his pipe with an air of profound contentment.

Hammersley was avenged, certainly.

Before setting out on his return, Florian paused to draw breath, to wipe the cold perspiration from his forehead, and nerve himself anew for aught that might befall him on his homeward way, for with tropical speed darkness had fallen now, and he was glad when he and Tyrrell overtook the three mounted men, as they had a most lonely district to traverse back to camp, and one in which they were not likely to meet friends ; so they now rode somewhat slowly on, breathing and enjoying what some one calls the cool and mysterious wind of night.

Zulus might be about in any number, with rifle, assegai, and knobkerie ; but though Florian and his companions rode with



arms loaded as a precaution, they scarcely thought of them, and were intent on comparing notes and studying the features of the country as a guide on their lonely way.

At last, with supreme satisfaction, after many detours and mistakes, they saw the red glowworm-like lights of the camp appearing in the streets of tents, and knew thereby that the last bugle had not sounded.

Erelong they heard the challenge of the advanced sentinel of an outlying picquet, and responding thereto, passed within the lines, when Florian went at once to the head-quarter tents to report himself to the Adjutant-General, together with the events that had so recently transpired by the Nondweni River.

‘You have done precisely what the General commanding would have ordered you to do,’ said the Adjutant-General, ‘and I am sure he will thank you for punishing the rascals as they deserved. There are too many of “Cardwell’s recruits” afloat in Cape Colony!’

‘Is Captain Hammersley still alive?’

‘Yes—but little more, I fear.’

He repaired straight to the sufferer’s tent, but was not permitted by the hospital orderly, acting under the surgeon’s strict orders, to see him—or at least to speak with him.

The ball had broken some of the short ribs on the left side, nearly driving them into the lung; thus he was in a dangerous state. Florian peeped into the bell-tent, and, by a dim lantern hung on the pole thereof, could see Hammersley lying on his camp-bed asleep, apparently, and pale as marble; and he thought it a sorrowful sight to see one whose splendid physique seemed of that kind which no abstract pain or trouble could crush—who could ever bear himself like a man—weak now as a little child—levelled by the bullet of a cowardly assassin.

Florian, though worn, weary, and sorely athirst after the skirmish by the Euzangonyan Hill, the subsequent pursuit, and all connected therewith, before betaking him to his tent, paid his next visit to Tattoo, for, after his friend, he loved his horse.

A little way apart from where the store-waggon were parked and the artillery and other horses knee-haltered, Tattoo was lying on a heap of dry brown mealie-stalks in a pool of his own blood, notwithstanding that, awaiting Florian's return and orders, a kindly trooper of the Mounted Infantry had bound an old scarlet tunic about the poor animal's off thigh, where the bullet, meant for his rider, had made a ghastly score-like wound, in one part penetrating at least seven inches deep ; and where Tattoo had remained standing for some time in one spot, the blood had dripped into a great dark crimson pool.

'Can nothing be done to stop it?' asked Florian.

'Nothing, sir,' replied a farrier-sergeant of the Royal Artillery.

'But the horse will die if this kind of thing goes on.'

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders, saluted, and turned away, while Florian put an arm round the drooping head of the horse caressingly ; and, as if sensible of his sympathy, the animal gazed at him with his large, soft brown eyes, that were streaked with blood-shot veins now.

'His vitals is safe, sir, anyhow,' said Tom Tyrrell.

'I can't leave him thus in the cold—for cold it is here, by Jove, at night ; bring a blanket from my tent, Tom, and put it over him.'

After belting the blanket about Tattoo, by the light of a stable-lantern, Florian lingered for a time beside the poor nag, who hung his head with unmistakable symptoms of intense pain, while his drooping eyes grew dull and heavy.

Without undressing, Florian threw himself on his humble camp-bed, which consisted of little else than a blanket and ground sheet, but was unable to sleep more than ten minutes or so at a stretch. The fighting, the hot pursuit by hill and stream and karroo—the excitement of every kind, and the whole work he had been doing—had fevered his brain, and ever and anon he started from his pillow as if a snake had been under it ; and so passed the few short hours till drum and bugle announced the *réveille*, and that the day-work of the camp had begun.

To those who saw him, he looked haggard in the cold, grey,

early light, as ne quitted his camp-bed, unrested and unrefreshed, though mere repose of the body is supposed to be a relief, and, as it was too early to disturb Hammersley, he went straight to visit Tattoo.

He was standing up now among the mealies of his litter, with his head drooping lower and his bright eyes more dim than ever ; but they actually seemed to dilate and brighten at the sound of his master's voice. The latter had brought him the half of his ration-biscuit, soaked in water ; and Tattoo looked at it with dumb longing, and turned it over in Florian's palm with his hot, soft, velvet nose ; but after trying to champ it once or twice he let it fall to the ground. Tattoo was incapable of swallowing now.

There was little time to do much, as the troops were soon to march ; but Tom Tyrrell brought some hot water in a bucket, and sluiced the wound with a sponge, and re-dressed it with such rough bandages as could be procured, and Florian got from Doctor Gallipot some laudanum to mix with the horse's drink to deaden the acuteness of the pain he suffered ; but it was all in vain : Tattoo sank grovelling down upon his fore-knees and rolled heavily over on his side, and, as the wound welled forth again, he turned his head and looked at his master, and if ever eyes expressed a sense of gratitude, those of the old troop-horse did so then.

'We march in a very short time, sir,' said the senior officer commanding the Mounted Infantry, as he reined in his charger for a minute *en passant* ; 'and in the cause of humanity, as your horse cannot recover, it had better be put out of pain.'

'Shot ?'

'Yes.'

'Poor Tattoo !'

Florian turned away, sick at heart, as he saw a soldier quietly dropping a cartridge into the breech-block of his rifle in obedience to the stern but necessary order ; for if left thus, the horse would be devoured while living by the monstrous Kaffir vultures.

With carefully sighted rifle, and distance as carefully judged,



Florian had 'potted' many a Zulu at various hundreds of yards, in common with his comrades ; he had shot, as he supposed, Josh Jarrett without an atom of compunction ; but now, as he hurried away, he put his fingers in his ears to shut out the report of the rifle that announced the death of Tattoo.

As a souvenir of the latter—for Dulcie, perhaps—he desired Tom Tyrrell to cut off one of the hoofs, and Tom polished the hoof and burnished the iron shoe till the latter shone like silver—the hoof that never again would carry Florian across the wild karroo, or to the front in the face of the enemy.

The Second Division now began its march to encamp on the fatal hill of Isandhlwana—that place of ill-omen.

Hammersley was conveyed with other wounded in an ambulance waggon, and it was decided that if he recovered sufficiently he should be sent home on sick leave to Britain. Florian occasionally rode by the side of the waggon, the motion of which was anything but easy or pleasant to those who were in pain.

How pale, he thought, Hammersley looked, with his delicate nostrils, clearly cut mouth, and dark moustache : and his mind went from thence to Finella Melfort, the girl he loved, who was so far away, and whom he might not be spared to see again.

'Write gently about all this affair to Miss Carlyon,' said Hammersley feebly. 'But the infernal telegrams will make poor little Finella *au fait* of my danger before details can reach her.' Then he muttered to himself, 'How truly it has been said that the indifferent are often tied to each other irrevocably, while those who love truly are parted far as east from west.'

'So you have fully avenged me, I hear?' he said, after a pause, while his features were contracted by pain.

'Of that there is no doubt,' replied Florian.

'For that I thank you, old fellow, though I am low enough—in that state, in fact, in which, we are told, we should forgive our enemies, and pray for those who despitefully use us.'

'These two rascals are past being forgiven now. I dare say long ere this their bodies have been swept into the White

Umvolosi,' said Florian, who still felt somewhat savage about the whole episode.

'Well, I am going to the rear at last, but I hope we shall meet again. If not,' he added, with a palpable break in his voice, 'my ring—take and keep it in remembrance of me.' And as he spoke Hammersley drew from his finger a magnificent gipsy ring, in which there was a large and valuable opal, and forced it upon the acceptance of Florian.

'The opal is said to be a stone of ill-omen,' said Hammersley with a faint smile, 'but it never brought ill-fortune to me.'

Florian knew nothing of that, and, if he had, would probably not have cared about it, though reared in Devonshire, the land of the pixies and underground dwarfs and fairies.

'The only reason for the stone being thought unlucky,' said Hammersley, smiling, 'is that Mark Antony, Nadir Shah, and Potemkin, wearers of great opals, all came to grief.'

'Going home, I hear, Hammersley,' lisped a smart young *aide-de-camp*, cantering up to the ambulance waggon. 'Egad, I envy you—you'll see something better than Kaffir damsels there!'

Hammersley, in the midst of his acute pain, somewhat resented the other's jollity, and said:

'The poor Kaffir damsels are content with the handiwork of God, and don't paint their faces red and white, as our English women do in the Row and Regent Street, Villiers.'

'You'll soon be home—there is no such thing as distance now,' rejoined the young staff officer.

'Yes, Villiers, I am sorry to leave you all; but I am going back to England—dear Old England—the land of fog, as Voltaire says, with its one sauce and its three hundred and sixty-five religions,' he added, with a feeble smile, thinking he was perhaps rather sharp in his tone to Villiers.

'And you have lost your favourite horse, I hear?' said Hammersley to Florian.

'Yes, poor animal.'

'Then take mine. I need not ask you to be kind to him. Who can say but what you may lend him to me one day for a

run at Melton again? Now, good-bye, old fellow, God bless you !

They wrung each other's hands and parted, Florian to ride on to the new camp at the Isandhlwana Hill, prior to the march for Ulundi, and Vivian Hammersley to go with the rest of the wounded and sick to the coast for conveyance to Plymouth.

---

## CHAPTER XLII.

### WHICH TREATS OF LOVE-LETTERS.

THE middle of July had come, and matters remained almost unchanged in the family circle at Craigengowan. Lady Fettercairn had not yet carried out her threat of getting rid of Dulcie Carlyon, though a vague sense of dislike of the latter was fast growing in her mind.

Hammersley seemed to be effectually removed from Finella's sphere, though by what means Lady Fettercairn knew not : but still Shafto made no progress with the heiress ; thus she feared some secret influence was exerted over him by 'this Miss Carlyon,' and would gladly have had old Mrs. Prim back again.

It was July now, we say ; and July in London, though Byron says,

‘The English winter ending in July,  
To recommence in August,’

to the lady's mind was associated only with dinners, concerts, races, balls, the opera, garden parties, and so forth, all of which she was relinquishing for an apparently hopeless purpose, while she knew that all her fashionable friends would be having strange surmises on the cause of this most unusual rustication, and inquiring of each other, ‘What are the Fettercairns about?’

Dulcie was painfully sensible that the lady of the house had become cold, stiff, and most exacting in manner to her, even



condescending to sneer at times, with a well-bred tone and bearing that some high-born ladies can assume when they wish to sting dependants or equals alike.

Finella's other grandmother, my Lady Drumshoddy, had ceased to be quite so indignant at her repulsion to Shafto, as she had a nephew—son of a sister—coming home on leave from India; and she thought perhaps the heiress might see her way to present herself and her thousands to young Major Ronald Garallan, of the Bengal Lancers, who had the reputation of being a handsome fellow and a regular 'lady-killer.'

Days and days and long weary weeks passed by—weeks of longing—and no word of hope, of love, or apology came to Finella across the seas from distant Africa, evolved as she hoped by the letter of Dulcie to Florian, and her heart grew sick with hope deferred, while more battles and skirmishes were fought, and she knew not that a vessel with the mail containing that missive which Florian posted at the orderly-room tent had been cast away in the Bight of Benin, and that the bags had been saved with extreme difficulty.

She contemplated Vivian Hammersley facing danger in battle, and sickness in camp, marching and toiling in trackless regions, with one belief ever in his angry heart that she had been false to him—she who loved him more truly and passionately every day. So time seemed to pass monotonously on, and her unsatisfied longing to be justified grew almost to fever heat; and death might take him away before he knew of her innocence. She tried to be patient, though writhing under the evil eyes of Shafto, the author of all this mischief.

Could it be that Vivian had been driven away from her for ever? Daily she brooded over the unhappy story of her apparent fault and its bitter punishment, and she would seem to murmur in her heart, 'Come back to me, my darling. Oh, how am I to live on thus without you?'

And amid all this no sense of pride or mortification came to support her.

By the girls the Cape news was, of course, closely and nervously watched. The tidings of Florian's promotion stirred

the hearts of both ; but to anyone else in Craigengowan it was, of course, a matter of profound indifference, if remarked at all.

A telegram briefly announced, without details, that Captain Hammersley had been wounded after the skirmish at the Euzangonyan Hill, but nothing more, as the papers were filled by the death of the Prince Imperial ; so, in the absence of other information, the heart of Finella was wrung to its core.

At last there came a morning when, in the house postal-bag, among others at breakfast, Shafto drew forth a letter for Dulcie.

‘A letter for Miss Carlyon from the Cape,’ he exclaimed ; ‘what a lot of post-marks ! Have you a friend there ?’

‘One,’ said Dulcie in a low voice ; and, with a sigh of joyous expectation, like a throb in her bosom, she thrust it into her bodice for perusal by-and-bye, when no curious or scrutinising eyes were upon her, after she had duly performed the most important duty of the day, washing and combing Snap, the pug ; and the action was seen by Shafto, who smiled one of his ugly smiles.

When, after a time, she was at leisure, Finella drew near her, expectant of some message.

‘Come with me, quick,’ said Dulcie ; ‘I have a letter for you !’

‘For me ?’

‘Enclosed in Florian’s.’

Quick as their little feet could take them, the girls hurried to a secluded part of the shrubberies, where stood a tree known as Queen Mary’s Thorn. Often, when visiting her nobles, the latter had been requested to plant a tree, as if emblematical of prosperity, or in order that its owner might tend and preserve it in honour of their illustrious guest.

Such a tree had been planted there by Queen Mary in the days of the old and previous family, when on her way north to Aberdeen in the eventful year 1562, when she rode to Inverness on horseback. Her room is still pointed out in the house of Craigengowan, and tradition yet tells in the Howe of the

Mearns that, unlike the beer-drinking Elizabeth (who boxed her courtiers' ears, and would have made Mrs. Grundy grow pale when she swore like a trooper), thanks to her exquisite training at the court of Catharine de Medici, her grace and bearing at table were different from those of her rival, who helped herself from a platter without fork or spoon, and tore the flesh from the roast with her teeth, like a Soudanese of the present day.

But, as Lord Fettercairn was greatly bored by tourists and artists coming in quest of this thorn-tree, under which the girls now seated themselves, and he could not make money out of it, at a shilling a head, like his Grace of Athole for a glimpse of the Falls of Bruar, he frequently threatened (as he cared about as much for Queen Mary as he did for the Queen of Sheba) to have it cut down, and would have done so long since, but for the intervention of old Mr. Kippilaw the nationalist.

The delight of Dulcie on unfolding her epistles was only equalled by the delight and gratitude of Finella on receiving hers.

'Oh, Dulcie, Dulcie!' ran the letter of Florian (with the whole of which we do not mean to afflict the reader), 'while here—thousands of miles away from you—how often my heart sickens with hungry longing for a sight of your face—for the sound of your voice, the sound I may never hear again; for in war time we know not what an hour may bring forth, or on each day if we shall see to-morrow. But, for all that, don't be alarmed about me. I have not the smallest intention of departing this life prematurely, if I can help it. I'll turn up again, never fear, darling—assegais, rifles, and so forth, nevertheless. The chances of our lives ever coming together again seemed very small when first we parted, yet somehow, dear Dulcie, I am more hopeful now; and something more may turn up when we least expect it; and we never know what a day may bring forth.'

Florian was far, far away from her, yet the sight of his letter, perhaps the first he had ever written to her, gave the lone



Dulcie, for a time, a blissful sense of love and protection she had never felt since that fatal morning when she found her father dead 'in harness'—dead at his desk. Oh, that she could but lay her head on Florian's breast !

And as Finella read and re-read Hammersley's letter a bright, sweet, happy smile curved her lips—the lips that he had kissed in that first time of supreme happiness, that now seemed so long, long ago.

'I have been cruel, hard, suspicious,' wrote Hammersley, 'till that fine young fellow, then a sergeant of ours—the sergeant of my squadron—a lad of birth and breeding evidently, showed me the letter of Miss Carlyon—at least that part of it which referred to us, darling. I did not know till then how bitterly I had been deceived, and how we had both been imposed upon. Pardon me for the cruel note I wrote you, and forgive me. But, Finella, as we have often said before, what view will your people take of us—of me? I am not quite a poor man, though very much so when compared with you. Think if monetary matters were reversed, and you accepted a rich man who asked you to wed him, would not people say it was his money you wanted?'

'Fiddlesticks!' whispered Finella parenthetically; 'what matters it what people say, if we love each other? We marry to please ourselves, Vivian, not them!'

'There are some arts that come by intuition to some people,' continued Hammersley, 'and, by Jove! darling, that of soldiering has come to your friend, Miss Carlyon's admirer. His career will be a sure one; not that I believe the marshal's bâton is often found in the knapsacks of Tommy Atkins. He was an enigma to me; his youth and all that belonged thereto seemed dead and buried—his past a secret, which he cared about revealing to none; but such are the influences of camp life and camaraderie that I drew to him, and now I am as familiar with the name of little Dulcie with the golden hair—golden, is it not?—as yourself; so give her a kiss for me. I owe her much—I owe her the happiness of my life in dispelling the dark cloud that rose between us—in taking the load from my heart

that made me blind and desperate, so that it is a marvel that I have not been killed long ago.'

As she read on, to Finella it seemed that it was all a dream that there ever had been any bitterness between them at all ; that his fierce, short note, pencilled in haste and delivered by the butler, had ever existed, or that he had left her abruptly and hastily, without a word or a glance of tenderness—not even uttering her name, perhaps, the musical name he was wont to linger over so lovingly ; that he had ever gone from her in a natural and pardonable tempest of anger and jealousy.

And now how well and fondly she could recall their first introduction in London, though it seemed so long ago, when their eyes first met with a sudden and subtle understanding, 'and their glances seemed to mingle as two gases meet and take fire,' as a writer says quaintly ; and though they had spoken but little then, and well-bred commonplaces only, each had felt that there were looks and tones untranslatable, yet full of sweet and hidden meaning to the sensitive.

For a time, as if loth to go back to the work-a-day world, both girls sat under Queen Mary's Thorn, each with letter in hand, lost in a maze of happy dreams. They could see the shrubberies and the woods about the mansion in all the glory of midsummer, the smooth spaces of emerald greensward, the balustraded terrace with its stately flights of steps, and the pool below it, where the white waterlillies and the white swans floated in sunshine, but all was seen dreamily, and to their ears like drowsy music came the hum of the honey-bee and the twittering and voices of the birds, while a beloved name hovered on the soft lips of each, and seemed to be reproduced in the songs of the linnet and thrush.

'You will write to Captain Hammersley, Finella,' said Dulcie, suddenly breaking the silence ; 'write to him and supplement all I have written to Florian. You see he is too good, too brave, not to be completely forgiving.'

'He has nothing to forgive,' said Finella, with just a little soupçon of pride.

'Well, of course not ; and his heart has come back to you

again, if it ever left you, when he knows that you love him only, and loved him always.'

'He sends you a kiss, Dulcie!' said Finella, pressing her lips to the girl's soft cheek.

'Be brave, Vivian,' urged Finella, when she wrote her letter; 'I mean to be so, so far as I am concerned, and do not be discouraged by any opposition on the part of grandmamma. I am rich enough to please myself. Let us have perfect confidence in each other, and we shall realise our dearest hopes, if God spares you to me. Oh, you dear, old, passionate silly!—to run away in a furious pet, as you did from Craigengowan, without seeking a word of explanation. How much all this has cost me, Heaven alone knows; but it is all over now.'

Her long and loving letter was despatched—posted by her own hand.

'But his wound—his wound—when shall I hear more of that?' was her ever-recurring thought.

Now Shafto had seen the Cape letter ere Dulcie had time to conceal it in her bosom, and watching both girls, he had seen them intent on their missives under the shade of Queen Mary's Thorn. So, knowing that Dulcie's letter could only be from Florian, intent on making mischief, he went to Lady Fettercairn, whom he found in her luxurious boudoir, and asked her if she 'approved of her companion corresponding with private soldiers.'

'Certainly not,' replied the dame sharply; 'was her letter this morning from such?'

'I am certain of it.'

'This is excessively bad form!' she exclaimed, reclining in a blue satin easy-chair, with one slim white hand caressing the smooth, round head of her goggle-eyed pug-dog. 'Send her here.'

'So you have a military correspondent, Miss Carlyon, I understand?' said she, when the culprit appeared.

'Yes, my Lady Fettercairn,' replied Dulcie, colouring painfully.

'Is he a relation?'



‘No ; you saw, and—and were struck by his likeness in my locket,’ faltered poor Dulcie.

‘Well—I do not approve, while under my roof, of your corresponding with private soldiers, or sergeants, and so forth !’

‘But my letter is from an officer of the 24th Regiment,’ said Dulcie, with a little pardonable pride.

‘So much the worse perhaps—an officer ?’

Lieutenant Florian MacIan.’

‘Indeed,’ said Lady Fettercairn, languidly fanning herself ; ‘I remember the name now—he was so called after the girl MacIan,’ she added half to herself. ‘MacIan ! what a name ! It is quite a calamity. I do not care to have you corresponding with these people—while here,’ she added vaguely.

Dulcie was on the point of reminding her that the unfriended Florian was the cousin-german of Shafto, but disdained to do so when the latter so selfishly forgot that matter herself, and bowing, withdrew in silence—too happy to feel mortified.

When she and Finella went to bed that night, though each knew every word of her letter by heart—they slept with them under their pillows—yea, and for many a night—that they might have them at hand to read the first thing in the morning, so simply sentimental had the proud Finella and the fond little Dulcie become !

Dulcie’s head was on her pillow, over which her red-golden hair was tossed in glorious confusion ; but no eyes saw it, save perhaps those of the man in the moon, the silver light of which shone on the carpeted floor, and then slowly stole upward in a white line upon her white coverleted bed, and ere long its soft and tender radiance fell upon the equally soft and tender face of the young girl, whose heavy dark lashes lay close on her rounded cheeks, and whose rosebud lips were parted and smiling, for she had a happy dream, born of her letter—a dream of Revelstoke and the old days there with Florian, ere grief, sorrow, separation, and the bitter realities of life came upon them.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## IN THE HOWE OF THE MEARN'S AGAIN.

'DULCIE was light of foot, young, bright, and active, yet with all her lightness and activity, times there were now when she failed to fly fast enough for Madame's smelling bottle, her fan, her Shetland shawl, her footstool, or down-pillow, especially when the latter had her headache, or that *migraine* which could only be cured in the atmosphere of Belgravia, and made her at times also most irritable with Finella.

Dulcie could play well and sing well too, not being one of those who think that, so long as the music of a song is heard, the words are quite unnecessary; but Lady Fettercairn 'snubbed' her attempts at either, and openly hinted that it was as much out of place for a 'companion,' however highly accomplished or trained, to seat herself at a piano in the drawing-room as to ride about the country lanes with a daughter of the house; but Dulcie, who was neither highly accomplished nor trained, but self-taught merely, so far as her music went, could scarcely believe that Lady Fettercairn meant steadily to mortify and humble her, till one day, when she thought she was alone, and was idling over the keys of the piano, singing softly to herself a verse of a little old song, that was a favourite of Florian's and seemed applicable to herself:

'I saw her not as others did,  
Her spirits free and wild;  
I knew her heart was often sad  
When carelessly she smiled;  
'Although amid a happy throng  
Her laugh was often loud;  
I knew her heart, her secret soul,  
By secret grief was bowed,'—

she stopped suddenly on finding the cold and inquiring blue eyes of Lady Fettercairn focusing her with her eyeglass. Indeed,

in a somewhat undignified manner, Madame seemed constantly on the watch for her now, and was always appearing at unexpected times and in unexpected places.

‘Please to cease this English ballad, Miss Carlyon ; it sounds as if more suited to the atmosphere of the servants’ hall than my drawing-room, I think.’

‘I thought I was alone,’ replied Dulcie, colouring deeply at this sharp and wanton rebuke ; and with tremulous hand she softly closed the piano and stole away, with difficulty restraining her tears, and hastened to her first morning work—the washing and combing of Snap, the fat little ill-natured pug, with an apoplectic-like neck, who was furnished with a beautiful collar of silver and blue enamel, and usually took his repose in a mother-of-pearl basket, lined with blue satin, in the boudoir ; and Snap had a pedigree longer than that of the Melforts of Fettercairn, and, unlike theirs, was not tarnished by political roguery.

Impulsive Dulcie had, as we have shown, unintentionally wound herself round the heart of the equally impulsive Finella, for she had an honest English truthfulness about her which, united to her naturally happy and loving nature, made her generally irresistible ; and now the girls had a powerful secret tie of their own between them, and to Finella Dulcie carried her complaints of her treatment.

‘No woman of heart—no lady would be intentionally unkind to you, Dulcie,’ urged Finella.

‘Not positively so, but she might by a glance or a word remind me of utter dependence for food and clothing in a way that would be felt more keenly than an open insult ; and, truth to tell, Lady Fettercairn speaks out plainly now. And then,’ added Dulcie with perfect simplicity, ‘a governess or companion, if pretty, is so liable to be snubbed.’

But the petty tyranny was continued from time to time.

Dulcie feared the dog Snap, yet, as she had been accustomed to have pets at home in Revelstoke, she succeeded in teaching it a few tricks, and rewarding the educational efforts by biscuits and lumps of sugar. Snap ere long would sit erect on his hind legs with a morsel balanced on the point of his remarkably short



black nose ; and when she said, 'Ready—present—fire,' and clapped her little hands, he shot it upwards and caught it skilfully with a snap in descending.

With girlish glee she was showing this feat to Finella, when Lady Fettercairn appeared and said, with a hard, metallic voice :

'Please not to teach my poor dog these vulgar tricks, Miss Carlyon ; these words of command—did you learn them from your friend the corporal, or sergeant, or what is he ?'

'Grandmamma !' exclaimed Finella, in a voice of astonishment and reproach, while Dulcie's heart swelled and her eyes filled with tears, and as usual she withdrew. 'How can you speak thus of her ?' asked Finella.

'I mean what I say,' was the cold response ; 'moreover, as you seem in her confidence, perhaps you will be good enough to tell her that if I permit her in the drawing-room occasionally to make herself useful when a little music or a hand at cards is wanted, she must not wear low bodies or short sleeves on any occasion,' added Lady Fettercairn, who had detected the eyes of more than one male guest wander appreciatively to the beautiful arms of Dulcie, that shone like polished alabaster, especially when contrasted with her black mourning costume.

And when Lady Fettercairn took the trouble to be ill, which was pretty frequently now, as she was worried by being kept away so long from London and London gaities, for no purpose or end, apparently, so far as Finella and Shafto were concerned, she established a headache as a domestic institution, during the prevalence of which no one was to address her on any subject whatever—more than all, no one was to cross her. But Shafto's extravagance and growing evil habits were becoming a source of perpetual thought to the Craigengowan household now.

If Dulcie had her troubles, so had also Finella, for the family scheme 'anent' Shafto was always cropping up from time to time. Thus, when that young gentleman, who had a very indifferent seat in his saddle, got a terrible 'spill' one day, in leaping a hedge, and was brought home in a very prostrate condition, which his addiction to wine considerably enhanced, the episode gave the cold, selfish, and unpatriotic peer, who had no

great love for his newly found heir, some cause for thought and consideration.

Failing heirs male, the peerage of Fettercairn, being a Scottish one, made before the Union, would go to Finella in the female line (as so many similar peerages do, to the endless confusion of family names and interests), and to the heirs male of her body.

It was a kind of consolation, but a sad one. Whom might she marry? 'That fellow Vincent Hammersley, perhaps!'

'Finella,' said Lord Fettercairn, in his hard, dry voice, and with the nearest attempt at a caress that ever escaped him, 'if aught was to happen to Shafto—which God forbid!—you will be the heiress to the title and estates.'

'Oh, don't talk thus, grandpapa!' she exclaimed.

'You care for the old name, child?'

'I do indeed, grandpapa.'

'And would make a sacrifice for it, if necessary'

'Believe me, I would!'

'To please me?'

'Yes.'

'You are a good girl, Finella. I wish then for you, apart from Shafto, who seems going to the dogs,' he muttered bitterly, 'to marry some worthy and suitable man, such as I shall select for you,' he added sententiously, and thinking, but not speaking, of the home-coming Major Ronald Garallan.

'Indeed, grandpapa, I will do no such thing,' said the wilful little beauty, firing up; 'I would rather select a husband for myself.'

'A day will come, girl,' said he, with an air of undisguised annoyance, 'when you will thank your grandmother and me, when thinking of all this matter, so necessary for consideration, when so much wealth and rank are involved. You are a good and a bright little pet, Finella, and I would not urge these matters on your consideration but for your own good.'

Yet Finella only sighed wearily, and thought of getting away from Craigengowan, and viciously twisted up her laced handkerchief with her nervous little hands.

But if Lord Fettercairn was beginning to be hopeless of the affair of Shafto and Finella, it was not so with the Lady of that ilk; she was still bent upon her matrimonial plans, and as a part thereof she remonstrated in a somewhat unfeeling way with the innocent and unoffending Dulcie, who became desperate in consequence.

Until now, when she became the object of unworthy suspicions, she had been contentedly enjoying the present, made all the more pleasant to her by the friendship of Finella, not troubling herself too much about the future; nor, indeed, would the question of that, if it meant ways and means, have been very reassuring to her. She could only indulge in the visions of 'love's young dream,' and no more, as yet.

'Your future is a serious consideration,' said Shafto one day, with reference to the subject, as he was airing his figure, with the aid of a stick, on the terrace.

'What does it matter to you—what do you care about it?' asked Dulcie, impatiently.

'A man must always feel interested in the future of a girl he loves, or has loved, even though she has deliberately thrown him over, and flouted him, as you have always done me.'

'I never could nor can I care for you, even as a friend; so simply cease this old annoyance, please,' she said, angrily.

'Beware, I say again,' said he, with knitted brows.

'Oh, you have been manly enough to threaten me before, but you are not yet the master of Craigengowan—and may never be.'

This had only reference to his rash course of life, and was but one of several random speeches or shots made by Dulcie, which always terrified and maddened Shafto, who suspected that in some mysterious way she knew more than he was aware of. At these times he could have strangled her, and now he grew pale with momentary rage.

'I will no longer submit to your cruelty and cowardice,' said Dulcie, her blue eyes flashing as she felt desperate.

'What will you do—tell Lady Fettercairn?' he sneered,

'No.'



‘What, then?’

‘That is my business,’ replied Dulcie, who, truth to say, was beginning to meditate a flight from Craigengowan—whither, she knew not and cared not.

Shafto was again silent and alarmed. With all his brilliant surroundings, he never knew what a day or night might bring forth.

‘After long experience of the world,’ says Junius, ‘I affirm before God that I never knew a rogue who was not unhappy.’

‘We always want what we cannot have, I suppose,’ said Dulcie, after a pause. ‘You are like the fox and the grapes, Mr. Shafto, in more ways than one; only the fox displayed superior sense by retiring when he found the coveted clusters beyond his reach, in persuading himself that they were sour; hence I would advise you to imitate the proceedings of the fox.’

Shafto turned away and withdrew without a word, as he beheld the almost noiseless approach of Lady Fettercairn from a conservatory door, with her cold, steel-blue eyes, more steely than ever, her light-brown hair, and firm aristocratic lips.

Like most fair women, she looked much younger than her years, and, as we have said in an opening chapter, her really fine face was without a line, as she had never had a cross or care in the world, save the alleged *mésalliance* of Lennard with Flora MacIan, and that, in a general way, was all forgotten now.

As she fixed her gaze on Dulcie, the expression of her face was hostile and lowering.

While feeling certain that something unpleasant was impending, Dulcie tried to greet her with a smile, though ‘the faculty of looking pleased when one’s heart is sick unto death—of fulfilling with equanimity a hundred petty social exactions, which one’s wearied soul loathes—is a talent verging on the border-land of genius.’

‘Miss Carlyon,’ began Lady Fettercairn, most freezingly, ‘to my surprise I overheard you giving some advice in a re-

markable and apparently very familiar way to my grandson, Mr. Shafto Melfort ?'

The remark was a question ; but before Dulcie, in her confusion, could form any reply, Lady Fettercairn spoke again :

'I have remarked, and intensely disapprove of these apparently secret meetings, conferences, or confidences, which you will, between persons in the very different relative positions of my grandson, young Mr. Melfort, and yourself, Miss Carlyon. They are, to say the least of them, very unseemly.'

'Lady Fettercairn !——' began Dulcie, almost passionately and with crimsoned cheeks. But the dame, full of one idea only, moved her head and resumed again, and pretty pointedly too :

You are no doubt perfectly aware, as you have resided some months among us, that my grandson is destined for his cousin, Miss Melfort ; and if her friend—as you say you are—you are somewhat too much in his society.'

'Can I help it ?' said Dulcie, in the dependency of her position compelled to temporise. 'I do not thrust mine on him—quite the reverse, Lady Fettercairn.'

'Finella does not seem to affect her cousin, I regret to say.'

'I think so too.'

'Thus, if she has mortified him, his heart may be easily caught on the rebound.'

'By *me* ?' asked Dulcie, in a straightforward manner.

'Yes,' replied Lady Fettercairn, sharply and icily.

'My position in your house will never permit me to dishonour myself.'

'Hoity-toity—dishonour !'

'A girl who would seek to ensnare a man—as you hint—for wealth or position, certainly does dishonour herself. Death were better than such a life as this !' murmured Dulcie wearily.

'What do you mean by death, Miss Carlyon ? I overheard your remark ; it is not fashionable or good form to talk of such unpleasant things, so please don't do it in future. Besides, at twenty, no one dies of grief or of mock-sentiment, believe me. A little time will show me whether you are or are not the

real friend of Miss Melfort, and whether you have not been, perhaps, too long here.'

'Too long, indeed, for my own peace,' said Dulcie, in a broken voice.

'I am responsible for the consequences, if he chooses to make a fool of himself with you,' said Lady Fettercairn, mistaking the meaning of Dulcie's speech.

'What *do* you mean, madam?' asked the latter, as a desperate and hunted feeling came over her.

'I am scarcely bound to explain myself, but might act,' replied Lady Fettercairn, astonished and almost discomfited by this audacity on the part of a dependant, 'especially so far as you are concerned. If I mistake not, I employed you, Miss Carlyon, to be my useful companion, and not to act as a monitress to my grandson, and to turn your gifts of beauty or accomplishments to the use you are doing.'

'Oh, this is indeed torture!' exclaimed Dulcie, as hot tears rushed to her eyes; and as she thought of what her real relations were with Shafto, and how she loathed him, she exclaimed with genuine agony, 'how can you—how dare you be so cruel?'

'Miss Carlyon, this tone to me? You forget yourself.'

'No, Lady Fettercairn,' retorted Dulcie, with kindling cheeks and blue eyes sparkling through their tears; 'too well do I know, and have been made to feel, that I am a dependant in Craigengowan; but I brought into it a spirit as honest and independent as if our places had been reversed—I the rich lady and you my poor dependant.'

'If I wrong you I regret it,' said Lady Fettercairn; 'so here, for a time, let this unpleasant matter end.'

And, with a slight bow, she sailed away into the conservatory.

But Dulcie felt that there the matter could not and should not end, and she began to think seriously of flying from Craigengowan.

With a little stifled cry that broke from her quivering lips, Dulcie rushed down the steps of the terrace and fled through the shrubberies like a hunted animal, looking neither to the right nor left, till she reached the sequestered spot where stood



Queen Mary's Thorn, and, flinging herself face downwards in the grass, she uttered again and again her father's name, as if she would summon him to her protection and aid, amid a flood of passionate tears—tears from the depths of her despair and intense humiliation.

Unmindful of the flight of time, or whether she was wanted for attendance on Lady Fettercairn or Snap, she lay there a whole hour, while the shadows of tree and shrub were lengthening round her. She thought her heart was breaking, so keen was her sense of the affronts to which she had been subjected; for, with all her sweet humility, Dulcie was not without innate dignity and pride; and in this mournful condition she was found by Finella, who, suspecting from her grandmother's bearing and aspect that something was wrong, had kindly gone in search of her.

She raised her up, caressed and kissed her, and then heard her story with no small indignation, though she knew not what to do in the situation.

'I shall never, never forget you, Finella,' sobbed Dulcie; 'but when I leave this I know not what will become of me.'

'Leave this—why?'

'Would you have me stay after what I have told you, and to be treated as I am by Lady Fettercairn? But now, to me, it seems that the future of my life will be gloomy indeed, and full of torture and sorrow.'

'Don't talk thus, Dulcie; if ever a girl was made for happiness and to give it to others it is you, my plump little English pet!' said Finella, taking Dulcie's tear-stained face between her pretty hands, and kissing it on both cheeks.

But Dulcie was determined to leave Craigengowan—to go that same night, indeed.

'For where?' asked Finella.

'Anywhere—anywhere!'

'Impossible!'

And Finella, by gentleness and kindness, soothed her over for a time, but a time only, and during that period she was relieved of the obnoxious presence of Shafto,

That personage found Craigengowan, when there were no guests thereat, especially such as he could lure into a game of *écarté*, or pool and pyramid, 'deuced slow,' so he took his departure for Edinburgh, where, as when in London, he often assumed the uncommon name of 'Smith' when involved, as he not unfrequently was, in rows and scrapes which he wished kept from the knowledge of Lord Fettercairn, and which sometimes led to his figuring before a presiding Bailie through the medium of the night-police.

---

## CHAPTER XLIV.

## EN ROUTE TO ULUNDI.

ON the 19th of June the Second Division, the operations of which were now combined with those of Sir Evelyn Wood's Flying Column, resumed its march to the front after the failure of certain nude ambassadors from Cetewayo to arrange with Lord Chelmsford, who, on the 16th—three days before his march began—had received the most mortifying intelligence that he was to be superseded in command of the South African Field Force by 'the coming man,' Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet Wolseley, ere whose arrival took place, he hoped to end the war by one vigorous blow delivered at Ulundi.

The troops were all in the highest spirits—full of fine ardour, and longing to wipe out the stain cast upon them by the miserable fate of the Prince Imperial.

The first movement of the division was the ascent of the great and steep Ibabanango Mountain, and when that was accomplished, Sir Evelyn encamped on the left bank of the River Vemhlatus, where open country stretched on the left flank towards where Fort Marshal was built, while the division encamped in his rear on ground where dwarf acacias grew, with tangled creepers, wild vines, and cane-like plants.

Service and exposure had now made deep the bronze of

Florian's face and hands ; but the former had matured its expression, and the fine manliness of it ; a careless, not precisely a rackets life—but a camp life, with perils faced in the field—had made his features and bearing less boyish than they were when Dulcie bade him farewell at Revelstoke.

'A generous friendship no cold medium knows,' says Pope ; thus, when active operations were resumed, Florian became painfully conscious how much he missed Hammersley at the head of the squadron, a charge that had now devolved upon himself ; for Vivian's spirit of camaraderie and bonhomie, his manly, gentlemanly, and soldierly bearing in every way, with the little secret they had to share between them, even as with Dulcie and Finella at Craigengowan, formed an additional link.

When would they meet again ? When would they greet each other, if ever, more ? And while surmising thus he viewed with genuine regard the valuable ring bestowed on him by Hammersley ; and patted with affection the fine charger with which he had also gifted him ; but many more in the ranks of the old 24th missed Hammersley as well as Florian.

On the 20th occurred one of those skirmishes with the Zulus which were of daily occurrence.

Villiers, the young aide-de-camp, came with orders for the Irregulars, Buller's Horse, and Florian's little squadron of Mounted Infantry to reconnoitre the ground between two branches of the Umhlatoosi River, and for this purpose they quitted the camp as usual before dawn.

As they rode on in silence, Florian's mind—for he was apt to get lost in thought—was dwelling on a legend he had heard, that the Zulu people were the descendants of certain shipwrecked seamen of a fleet which Pharaoh, King of Egypt, had sent to the Southern Sea, and that Zululand, some say Sofala, was the ancient Ophir, where forests of cedar and ebony grew, and gold, diamonds, and all manner of precious stones existed in certain geological strata.

As the Mounted Infantry rode on over ground where troops had never ridden before, herds of spiral-horned koodoos, of



eland, of hartebeest and the striped zebra went scampering before them.

‘What sport we might have here had we not other work in hand!’ exclaimed an officer regretfully.

In two detachments they examined the hills on the flanks of the way which was to be the route of the division. Buller’s Horse took those on the right; Florian’s Infantry those on the left. The former soon unearthed some Zulus, who fired a ragged volley and then vanished over a steep crest, where it was impossible to pursue them.

Skirmishes of this kind went on almost hourly till the 26th, when Florian became involved in what seemed a fatal catastrophe. It had now become evident to the Zulus that these continued advances of the Second Division menaced the great Royal Kraal of Ulundi. Thus more and more of them were visible daily. Their opposition was growing, and they made resolute attempts to burn up all the feathery grass along the route; and being dry as hay, it readily caught fire, to the peril of ammunition in the pouches, boxes in the gun-limbers and store-waggons.

On the 24th Sir Evelyn Wood’s column had reached a place called the Jackal Ridge, and encamped on its summit, while the tents of the division were pitched at its base in a district where the valleys were full of beautiful green bushes, where cotton trees and castor-oil plants grew in the wildest luxuriance, and the tall scarlet spikes and spear-like leaves were varied by the green of the spekboom and the *melkbosh* or spurge plants of various kinds.

From the camp of the Flying Column on the summit of the ridge a great kraal, supposed to be Ulundi, was seen in the distance, the kraal of which traders and native scouts had circulated the most fabulous descriptions.

‘Vague stories of the wealth of the king went about,’ says Captain Thomasson, adjutant of Buller’s Irregular Cavalry. ‘Splendid visions of loot in the shape of ivory, ostrich feathers, and diamonds filled the soldiers’ eyes. Incredible stories of the amount of treasure taken at Isandhlwana were circulated.

It is needless to say these golden visions were broken, not a man of the regulars being a sovereign the better for any loot taken. Some of the irregulars got small sums from deserted kraals. The amount taken altogether was small. . . . From here a good view of Ulundi can be seen—the sight we have waited six long months for. The delight one felt must have been similar to that which animated the ten thousand at the first sight of the sea. One was almost tempted to shout Ulundi! Ulundi! as they did Thalassa! Thalassa! From the same height we could see the sea in the far distance.'

Prior to attacking some kraals that were in front, on the 25th Sir Evelyn Wood's column pushed forward again, and crossed a stream by laying across it mattings of grass—a process that occupied fully seven hours—after which the Second Division followed.

Early on the morning of the 26th, the day we have referred to, Lord Chelmsford personally paraded a force to attack the enemy.

It consisted of two squadrons of the 17th Lancers, looking gay in their smart blue tunics, faced and broadly lapelled with white, their swallow-tailed banneroles fluttering out upon the wind; Buller's picturesque-looking Irregular Horse, Florian's Mounted Infantry, Major Bengough's wild-looking natives, with rifle, shield, and assegai, and two pieces of cannon.

The kraals to be attacked stood in a spacious valley, five miles distant from the camp, and a stern resistance was expected.

At a canter the horse and artillery took a circuitous route, and gained an eminence overlooking the kraals, which were speedily set on fire by shells, and, being of dry and inflammable material, were at once sheeted with red flame.

In each of these military kraals were two thousand five hundred huts, and the dark smoke from them ascended in separate columns of stupendous height into the clear and ambient African sky, and to avenge their destruction a great column of some thousands of Zulus, like a sombre, moving sea, studded

with grey and glittering objects—bull-hide shields and assegai-blades—were seen advancing swiftly along the green and verdant valley.

‘This will be no crutch-and-toothpick business!’ exclaimed Villiers, the joyous young aide-de-camp, laughingly; ‘here they come,’ he added, looking through his field-glasses, ‘led by a tearing swell, with cranes’ pinions on his head, and no end of cows’ tails at his waist, and a shield like a door, by Jove!’

The words had scarcely escaped when his horse was shot under him, and he ‘came a cropper,’ as he phrased it, in doing so nearly swallowing his cigar.

But the Royal Artillery 9-pounders opened on them, plumping shell after shell into their dense dark masses, so they paused, wavered, faced about, and fled with the wildest precipitation, pursued by the fiery and active Redvers Buller, of the 60th Rifles (who had served in the China campaign of 1860, and with the Red River expedition under Sir Garnet Wolseley), at the head of his Irregular Horse, the Mounted Basutos, and Florian’s Mounted Infantry.

On they went, over the maimed and torn, the dead and the dying, naked and bleeding. Many were shot and cut down on every side, and the casualties would have been more terrible but for the awful state of the atmosphere, which was steamy, hot, and laden with the overpowering fragrance of sheets of tropical flowers and plants that clothed the two faces of the valley.

In the hot pursuit, as Florian was taking his horse over a watercourse by a flying leap, there occurred to him one of those mishaps which, from one circumstance or another, few horsemen have not experienced. In mid-leap, the fiery animal was suddenly scared by a huge black *aasvogel* (a kind of vulture), that flew upward from among the dwarf bushes with a vicious croak, and caused it to swerve under him in the saddle, giving his whole frame a painful wrench that, without a wound or bruise, rendered him for the time incapable of riding a yard further, and with difficulty he dismounted.

What was to be done? Advance with the mounted men



under Buller he could not, neither could he return rearward to the camp, now some eight miles distant, alone !

In a solitary hut of the nearest kraal—a hut that had escaped the conflagration of the rest—he was placed till the force could pick him up on its return. There Tom Tyrrell placed a cloak over him, loaded his revolver, and left him to continue the pursuit ; while his charger—the gift of Hammersley—was meantime appropriated by Villiers, the staff officer.

Perfect rest made the acute pain he was enduring subside ; but he still felt weak and worn, and there he lay alone, amid utter silence now, ‘building castles in the air, with conversations in the clouds’—conversations with Dulcie, and castles for her to inhabit.

In the almost darkened hut, dome-shaped, and roofed with thatch and enormous leaves, and into which light came by the narrow wattle-framed door alone, he lay thinking of her, and the unpleasantness of her life at Craigengowan, and marvelled much what manner of place it was ; for, till her letter came, he had scarcely heard of it before, he felt assured. He thought, too, of the chances—the problem of their meeting again—and that problem stared him in the face in the light like an unsolved question, or the game that one goes to bed leaving unfinished ; but with him and with her it would be the most important move in the game of their young and, at present, divided lives—the lives and loves of two who were bound up in each other, all the more that they had no one to care for in this world save each other.

Meanwhile one anxious hour followed another, and there came no sound of troops on the sward—no clatter of accoutrements to announce that the pursuing Horse were returning his way.

The Second Division and Wood’s Flying Column had marched to a mountain called the Entonjaneni, and there formed a camp about twenty miles distant from Ulundi as the crow flies. Vast quantities of thorn-bushes grew on the left of it, and before it spread an open plain ; and to this camp came nearly the last envoys of Cetewayo, bearing two elephants’

tusks as a sign of amity, promising a herd of cattle, and so forth. The tusks were declined, and the original conditions insisted on. However, Lord Chelmsford agreed to delay his final advance till the evening of the 29th of June.

Buller's Horse and the other mounted men were returning slowly from their long pursuit, when they drew near the kraals so recently destroyed, and saw that one hut was burning still, and casting a lurid light against the evening sky. All thought this strange, as before the repulse of the Zulus in the valley the fire in every kraal was completely over, as there seemed nothing more left to burn.

Suddenly Tom Tyrrell cried out, in a voice of the keenest excitement :

'The hut in which we left our officer is in flames—the poor fellow will be burned to death !'

'Who?' exclaimed Villiers.

'Our poor officer—Lieutenant MacIan.'

'God ! you don't say so !'

'See for yourself, sir.'

'It is too evidently as you say. Forward at a gallop !'

The flames were sinking fast when they reached the hut, now reduced to a smouldering heap of ashes, and the horrible odour of burned human flesh overpowered the perfume of the wild flowers, amid which the great bees were yet humming ; and poking amid the hot *débris* with their lances, the men of the 17th found the charred remains of what had been evidently a human body ; and though inured to war, to bloodshed, and daily human suffering, the soldiers looked blankly and inquiringly in each other's faces, pausing for orders, and wondering what was to be done now.

In the hut the luckless Florian had lain for a time on its clay-beaten floor listening for every sound. He had a natural fear of Zulus coming upon him suddenly and assegai-ing him in cold blood—if indeed the blood of these fierce savages was ever cold till death seized them.

The idea was intolerable, and he writhed on the hard floor and hearkened intently with his ear placed close thereto.

Shots in the far distance announced that fighting was going on somewhere—that Redvers Buller, the unwearied, was ‘at it again’—but told him nothing more. What if the advanced troops were defeated—had to fall back towards the Entonjaneni Mountain by some other route, and had to abandon him to his fate?

In war, of what value is one human life, save to the proprietor thereof?

Anon, amid these exciting and oppressive thoughts, he became conscious of a singular and awful odour pervading the place. He had knowledge enough of it by ample past experience to know that it came from the body of a dead Zulu. He peered about, and in a corner hitherto unnoticed, near a pile of fresh bull-hides, intended doubtless for conversion into long shields, partly covered by one, lay the corpse of a Zulu warrior, whose shaven head, with the military ring or fillet, and bare feet, with anklets of burnished copper, were visible.

Pah!

Such a companion as this proved too much for his nerves, and at all risks—the risk of being seen by scouting Zulus—he crawled out of the hut into the pure and grateful air of heaven, and contrived to reach a clump of dwarf mimosa-trees at a little distance on the slope of an eminence, and therein he lay to await the return of his comrades.

He had with him his water-bottle and a brandy-flask; and with the contents of these, a sandwich or two (from his haversack) made of tinned meat, and a ration of biscuit, he made a meal, as mid-day was now past, and, lighting a cigarette, strove to study the art of being patient.

As he lay there and smoked, numbers of insects, nameless to him—cicadas, huge moths and butterflies—huge in the tropics—buzzed and flitted about him; small birds, the gold and emerald cuckoo, sunbird and finch, with beautiful plumage, flitted from branch to branch overhead; a lizard or chameleon crawled along. Dazed by the heat, and under the influence of the latter, and perhaps of his cigarette, Florian dropped asleep.

From this he was startled by a trumpet sounding the advance,



and was roused just in time to see the detachment, consisting of the two Lancer Squadrons, the Mounted Infantry, Frontier Horse, and Bengough's Natives resuming their route to the camp, after investigating the ashes of the hut he had quitted, and which had no doubt caught fire from the hot embers of others blown against it by the wind.

But Florian's heart sank within him at the contemplation of what might have *been* had he slept on—had the trumpet not been sounded, and the troops had ridden away, leaving him helpless in that solitude.

---

## CHAPTER XLV.

### THE LOADED DICE.

SHAFTO was located in a quiet hotel in St. Andrew Square, Edinburgh, whither he had come in hope to raise money to meet the difficulties in which he had become involved. When away from the splendid thralldom of Craigengowan—for thralldom he deemed it now—he was daily and nightly in the habit of imbibing more than he would have ventured to do there; thus he was becoming slow of speech, with the fishy eye and the fevered breath of the habitual tippler, even at his years, while in dress he adopted a style that was a curious combination of the dandy and the groom.

The many confiding tailors, jewellers, horse-copers, wine-merchants, and others whom he had honoured by his patronage, were now getting beyond all bounds with their importunity and—as he thought—impertinent desire to have their bills settled; while, disgusted with him, Lord Fettercairn had been heard more than once to say, even to old Mr. Kippilaw:

‘If Finella had been a boy I should not have cared so much about there being no other grandson of my own to ensure the succession and carry on the title.’

But the peer did not yet know the worst.

Occasional visits to Edinburgh, and still more those to London, were always involving Shafto in one or other disgraceful scrape; for, notwithstanding a most liberal allowance, he was often at his wits' end for money, and was over head and ears in gambling debts. Thus he was a bitter pill to the patriotic peer, his 'grandfather,' and he was on the verge, he feared, of dire disgrace, as a whole lot of post-obits might soon come to light—on the fortune he reckoned would come to him on Lord Fettercairn's death or his marriage with Finella; for with two such prospects the Jew money-lenders and other scoundrels, who trade as such, in Pall Mall and elsewhere, under double names, had seen things in a 'rosy' light, and let him thus have 'no end of money.'

And now, as a means of recruiting his exchequer for a time, he bethought him of young Kippilaw, who had been left £30,000 unexpectedly by an uncle in Glasgow, and his first thought was to flatter and fleece the fellow if he could, though the spruce little W.S. was on the eve of his marriage with one of the many daughters of Lord Macowkay, the eminent senator of the College of Justice; so he invited that gentleman to a quiet little dinner at his hotel, 'just to pick a bone—sharp eight.'

Little Kippilaw, who was always flattered by the society of a prospective peer, as something to talk about in the Parliament House, accepted with a radiant countenance; and, as he had rather a showy-looking friend who was passing through Edinburgh on his way to Drumshoddy Lodge, he asked permission to bring him.

'Certainly, of course,' said Shafto.

'Major Garallan is a client of the firm.'

'What! the old woman Drumshoddy's nephew?'

'The same.'

'All right; let us have him.'

So the Major came in due course. He was the beau-ideal of a cavalry man—tall, handsome, well set up and put together, dark-complexioned and regular-featured, with his ears and neck scorched by the Indian sun to a hue in which red and bistre

were blended ; but an awkward accession he proved to Shafto eventually.

The dinner, with its soup, fish, and many *entrées*, was all that could be desired, from the curaçoa to the coffee, and put Shafto's two guests in excellent humour with themselves and the world generally ; the cloth was drawn, the wine and dessert put on, and, seated at the head of the table, Shafto almost forgot his troubles, as he took bumper after bumper of sparkling Pommery-greno, while from the tall windows could be seen the space of the stately square, with its tall central column crowned by the colossal statue of Melville, and all its many-pillared and palatial banks and public offices whitened by the silver light of the summer moon.

The Zulu War was, of course, spoken of, the mishaps at Isandhlwana and Intombe discussed, though the subject was shirked by Shafto, who cared nothing about it, save in so far as the *danger* that then menaced Florian ; but little Kippilaw, who was a full-blown captain in the Queen's Edinburgh Rifle Brigade, talked a vast amount of 'shop' to the amused Major Garallan, whom he ventured to instruct in the 'new method of attack,' and thereby drew out the latter insensibly to talk a little of his Indian experiences, for he had served in the expedition to Perak, against the Malays, and the Jowaki expedition on the frontier of Peshawur, and been wounded at the storming of Jummo ; affairs that, though small in themselves, went rather beyond a sham fight in the Queen's Park, including the storming of St. Anthony's Chapel and forming a rallying square in the Hunter's Bog.

And now the conversation began to flag, though Shafto had circulated the wine freely, and he thought the time had come to propose 'a little mild play.' One circumstance surprised him—that though they were supposed to be connected by marriage, the somewhat haughty Major never made the slightest reference to the subject.

'A quiet rubber of whist, with a dummy,' suggested Kippilaw.

'With a dummy, no,' said Major Garallan. 'I like poker, but——'



‘Poker be hanged!’ interrupted Shafto.

At this abrupt speech the Major, a well-bred man, pushed back his chair a little way, while Shafto paused and felt in his waistcoat-pocket a little white square ivory object—of which more anon.

It was arranged that Shafto and Kippilaw should have a mild game of *écarté*, while Major Garallan smoked, idled, and looked on—a course that the first-named gentleman by no means approved of, as, for cogent reasons, he had an intense dislike of having his play overlooked.

Kippilaw, inflamed by the wine he had taken inconsiderately—while Shafto, cautious to a degree, had not, to use a phrase of his own, ‘a hair of his coat turned,’—allowed himself to be lured into doubling the stakes again and again; and Shafto, who had his own ultimate end in view, while playing to all appearance with intense care, allowed himself to lose eventually the sum of £500, for which, as he had not the most remote intention of paying it, he with great liberality gave an ‘I O U’ to Kippilaw, who, not being an habitual gamester, but by nature and profession cautious and gentlemanly in spirit, was rather scared in accepting the document.

Then a pause ensued in the game, during which more wine—Pommery-greno—was circulated, fresh cards produced, and Shafto invited the Major to play, but he declined somewhat curtly, as Shafto thought.

He then urged Kippilaw to let him have his ‘revenge,’ and the latter was willing enough to let him have back the I O U if he won it, or any portion thereof, as he disliked to possess such a document signed by the son of a client of the firm, and thought secretly that he would not play a shilling beyond that sum; but he had partaken of too much champagne, which, when the Major’s back was turned, Shafto contrived to dash with brandy, and soon the demon of play, rivalry, and acquisitiveness overruled the reason of Kippilaw; but the nefarious action of Shafto had not been unnoticed by the Major, who had affected to be twirling his moustache by the aid of a mirror above the high black marble mantelpiece.

Shafto produced a dice-box; he lost, and Kippilaw won. as it was intended he should; and a silly laugh of exultation escaped him.

'Another I O U—you're in luck's way to-night, Kippilaw,' exclaimed Shafto.

'How much have I won?'

'A hundred and fifty.'

The play went on—the dice-box rattled again and again, while the Major, with his back against the mantelpiece, looked silently and curiously, but darkly on. Shafto won back—what he had lost as a lure—his £500, with wonderful celerity, and then another sum of £100, for which Kippilaw gave him a cheque, signed by a very unsteady hand.

'Double or quits,' said Shafto, staking the cheque, with his hand on the dice-box.

'Thanks—but I don't think I'll play any more,' said Kippilaw.

'Oh—indeed—please yourself,' said Shafto scornfully, while biting his lips with anger and disappointment—'but after gaining £500 from me—the devil—are you afraid?'

'No.'

'What then?'

'I have played enough—more deeply than I ever did before.'

'Enough!' repeated Shafto contemptuously.

'Yes.'

'Too much, indeed,' said Major Garallan suddenly; 'and, by Jove, you do right to stop, Kippilaw.'

'What the devil do you mean?' asked Shafto, becoming pale with sheer fury.

What I say,' replied the officer coolly.

'Who the —— gave you a right to interfere?' demanded Shafto in a bullying tone.

'I have watched your play, sir, for some time past,' replied the Major quietly, 'and know right well how and why the tide of fortune turned so suddenly in *your* favour.'

An oath escaped Shafto, and snatching up the cards, he hurled the pack to a remote corner of the room.

‘What does all this mean?’ asked Kippilaw, staring half tipsily and with a scared air at the speakers.

‘It means, you goose, that you have been playing with a fellow who is no better than a blackleg,’ said the Major, with quiet scorn. ‘No, *you don’t*,’ he added, grasping, as if with a smith’s vice, the wrist of Shafto, who, uttering a cry like a jackal, seized a cut-glass decanter, with the fell intention of hurling it at the speaker’s head, but the latter cowed him by one steady glance.

‘You shall repent this insolence,’ said Shafto, starting to his feet. ‘I will teach you to question a man of honour with impunity.’

‘Honour!’ laughed Garallan.

‘You shall hear from me, sir.’

‘In what fashion—an action at law?’

‘No; one perhaps you may shrink from.’

‘Very probably. You don’t mean a duel?’

‘I do.’

‘Where?’

‘On the sands at Boulogne.’

‘Fool! People don’t fight duels nowadays, and if they did, I am not required to fight with a—swindler! That is the word, so let us hear no more high-falutin. A man of honour, indeed!’

Garallan burst into a fit of scornful laughter, and Shafto, mad with rage and disappointment, was rushing to grasp the poker, when the former, in a moment, and before the apparently helpless Kippilaw could interfere, if able to do so, in any way, had struck his would-be opponent down, and wrenched from his left hand, which he tore open by main force, something that Shafto had attempted to put in his mouth, and which, on examination, proved to be—a loaded die.

---



## CHAPTER XLVI.

## SHAFTO'S HORIZON BECOMES CLOUDY.

THE Major had gone to the 'little dinner' at the desire of Kippilaw, but unwillingly ; he had evidently heard something about Shafto—knew him by reputation, and during the meal had treated him perhaps rather cavalierly, which Shafto was too self-assertive or too 'thick-skinned' to perceive, though Kippilaw did.

The little W.S., who had never been in a 'scrimmage' since he left the High School, was desperately scared by the whole affair, and especially by the mauling given to Shafto, the son of a client of the firm, the heir of Lord Fettercairn, by the Major, who made very light of the matter, and called him 'a d——d cad, and worse than a cad.'

When Shafto gathered himself up they were gone, and he heard their footsteps echoing in the now silent square (where the tall column stood up snowy white in the light of the waning moon) as they turned westward along George Street, and a feeling closely akin to that of murder gathered in his heart as he poured the most horrible maledictions on the Major, and drank a deep draught of foaming Pommery-greno, well laced with brandy.

That fellow had spoiled his game, and his nefarious plans against young Kippilaw, whom he regarded as a wealthy pigeon to pluck. No good ever came of a quiet third party watching one's play. He would be even with the Major yet, he muttered, as he ground his teeth ; but how ? The Major had carried off the loaded dice, and after splitting it open, as doubtless he would, exposure everywhere was sure to follow.

He was wrong in one supposition, however, as the Major quitted Edinburgh next morning for Drumshoddy Lodge, and, of course, would be very unlikely to expose in public one whom he deemed a connection of his own.

Intending to attribute the whole affair of the loaded dice—

alleged to be loaded, he would insist—to a tipsy brawl on the Major's part, to a mistake or confusion, and carry it off somehow, Shafto, driven to desperation by want of money on one hand, even to settle his hotel bill in St. Andrew Square, and by some days of terrible doubt and depression on the other, after writing a private note to Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw about his affairs, and fixing an hour for a visit 'thereanent,' ventured to present himself at that gentleman's chambers, where a shock awaited him.

As he passed through the hall, he saw Madelon—Madelon Galbraith—seated in a waiting-room.

'Madelon here—for what purpose?' thought he, with growing anxiety, as he was ushered into the presence of Mr. Kippilaw, who received him with intense frigidity—even more than frigidity—as he barely accorded him a bow, and neither offered his hand nor rose from his writing-table, but silently pointed to a chair with his pen.

Despite this cold welcome, Shafto's constitutional insolence of thought and bearing came to him with a sense of the necessity for action, for his grim reception by the usually suave and pleasant old lawyer roused all his wrath and spite to fever-heat.

'So—so, sir,' began the latter, 'so you, the heir to the estates and title of Fettercairn, actually tried to rob my simple son by means of loaded dice till exposed by Major Garallan, to whom my warmest gratitude is due, the split fragments are now in my possession; but I presume it was not on that matter you came to consult me. And, not content with such vile conduct, you sought to taunt, bully, and inveigle the Major into a duel, in which perhaps your superior skill or cunning might achieve his murder. Duels, however, are out of date, but penal servitude is not, so beware, Mr. Shafto—beware, I say—there is a rod in pickle for you, I suspect.'

And as he spoke the keen, glittering eyes of the old lawyer glared at Shafto above the rims of his *pince-nez*.

'But you come to confer with me about your private debts Mr. Shafto,' he added, lowering his tone.

‘Yes.’

‘You know the total amount, I presume?’

‘Scarcely.’

‘How so?’

‘Well, when letters come to me I open the white envelopes and chuck all the d——d blue ones into the fire uninspected.’

‘A sensible proceeding—very! How long can it go on?’

‘I don’t know—perhaps you do,’ was the dogged reply.

As if it was useless to ask further questions, Mr. Kippilaw looked over some papers which Shafto had sent for his consideration, and his countenance lowered and his white bushy eyebrows became closely knitted as he did so, while Shafto watched him with an aspect of languid interest which he was far from feeling, and sucked the ivory head of his crutch-stick the while.

‘Why, Mr. Shafto,’ said Mr. Kippilaw, ‘this is rank dishonesty.’

‘What is?’

‘This mess I am contemplating.’

‘Don’t talk thus to me; the greatest robbers in the world, after one’s own family lawyers——’

‘Sir!’ interrupted Mr. Kippilaw, smiting the table with his hand, and looking dangerous.

‘To business, then,’ said Shafto sulkily.

‘There’s this bill of Reuben Levi, the London money-lender, of which I have a note, drawn originally for £500, at three months, bearing interest at sixty per cent., and renewed three times!’

‘Well?’

‘The money value to the drawer is not likely to be much at the close of the precious transaction.’

‘D——n, I think not.’

‘Lord Fettercairn will have to take up these.’

‘A few more too, I suspect,’ groaned Shafto.

‘This is quite as disgraceful as your affair of the cards at that club in Princes street.’

‘Which?’



‘When you were found playing baccarat with ever so many cards too much in the pack. I am sick of you and your affairs, as you call them. The man who can act as you do, in these and other matters, is not likely to discharge the duties that devolve on the proprietor of Craigengowan and the title of Fettercairn, alike teeming with temptations; therefore I think his lordship will put it out of your power to make ducks and drakes of the inheritance, if he takes my advice.’

‘*Your* advice!’ thundered Shafto.

‘Precisely so,’ said Mr. Kippilaw quietly, as he thrust all Shafto’s papers into a drawer and locked it. ‘Lord Fettercairn has lost all patience with you, sir. People should not incur debts they are unable to pay. I know of no action more mean or contemptible than to make some man—a poor one, perhaps—lose for another’s amusements and enjoyments. You ought to remember this.’

‘Thank you, Mr. Kippilaw. You are, I believe, a leading elder in your kirk, whatever that may mean; but I’ll not have you preach to me.’

‘A man should do anything rather than defraud his neighbour.’

‘D——n you, you old cur! do you speak of “defrauding” to me—you, a lawyer?’ said Shafto, grasping his cane.

‘I do,’ replied Mr. Kippilaw, firmly. Shafto quailed under his gaze, and turned to leave the room. ‘Mr. Gyle!’ said the lawyer, ere he could do so.

Shafto turned and faced him.

‘Ha!—you answer to your *name*, I see!’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Simply that I begin to think you are an impostor?’

Shafto glared at him, white with rage and dismay, while a minute’s silence ensued.

Perhaps the astute lawyer had read that remarkable essay by Lord Bacon on cunning, wherein he tells us that an unexpected question or assertion may startle a man and lay him open. ‘Like to him,’ he continues, ‘that having changed his name, and was walking in St. Paul’s, another came behind him,

and called him suddenly by his true one, whereat straightways he looked back.'

'An impostor, dare you say?' exclaimed Shafto, taking one pace to his front.

'Considering your conduct, I begin to think so.'

Shafto felt for a moment or so relieved, and said:

'What the devil do you mean? You had a properly attested certificate of my birth?'

'Attested—yes.'

'Was not that all-sufficient, even for your legal mind?'

'Not—now.'

'Why not now?'

'Because I remember that it is mutilated.'

Shafto winced.

'It is there, however,' said Mr. Kippilaw, pointing with his pen to a green charter box labelled 'Fettercairn,' and Shafto thought that if he did not adopt a high tone he might fail in the matter.

'You scoundrel,' he exclaimed, as he snashed his cane on the writing-table, scattering letters and documents in every direction; 'doubt of my identity is an insult now!'

Mr. Kippilaw did not lose his temper; he puckered up his eyebrows, actually smiled, and looked cunningly at Shafto as he pulled or twitched his nether lip with a finger and thumb. He was evidently reconsidering the situation in his own mind, and coming to the conclusion that there was a mistake somewhere.

Shafto was sharp enough to read this at a glance; he thought of Madelon, and his heart became filled with black fury.

'I think our interview is ended,' said Mr. Kippilaw quietly, as he dipped a pen in the ink-bottle and laid his left hand on a bell. 'You will be good enough to leave my chambers, sir, or I shall have you shown out by the hall-porter.'

There was nothing left for him but to withdraw, and as he did so, Madelon Galbraith, who had been evidently waiting an interview, entered Mr. Kippilaw's room, and as she passed she gave Shafto a terrible glance with her black, sparkling eyes—a

glance of hatred and triumph—as she had not forgotten, but remembered with true Highland bitterness, the day of her rough expulsion from Craigengowan, when he had actually hounded a dog upon her.

Shafto shivered ; he felt as if an iron net-work was closing round him, and that a fierce legal light might yet be cast on his secret villainy.

Guilt does not always look to the future. It is as well, perhaps, under any circumstances, that we never can see that mystic but certain period.

Smarting under Shafto's unbridled insolence to himself, and acting very probably on some information accorded to him by Madelon Galbraith, whom he desired to remain at his house in Edinburgh, Mr. Kippilaw took means to achieve more—means that he should have adopted immediately after his interview with Shafto.

Discomfited, there was nothing left for the latter now but to cast himself on the mercy of Lord and Lady Fettercairn in the matter of his debts and involvements ; and this, after a few days of doubt, irresolution, and much hard drinking, he resolved to do, and so set out for Craigengowan.

In these days the strands of Fate had been twisting slowly but surely into a fatal coil !

---

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### THE SQUARE AT ULUNDI.

IN the camp at the Entonjaneni Mountain the troops had two entire days' rest, which enabled Florian to recover completely from the effects of the accident which had befallen him in the pursuit of the Zulus.

In the afternoon of the 28th a telegram came announcing to Lord Chelmsford that Sir Garnet Wolseley had arrived, that he



had assumed the entire command, and requesting a plan of the campaign, which, apparently, Lord Chelmsford, having conducted thus far, was resolved to finish for himself, as he did.

With the same messengers came the mails for the troops, and, to Florian's delight, there came a letter from Dulcie—we say delight at first, for that sentiment soon gave place to one of anxiety.

At the sight of her handwriting, his heart went back in a day-dream to the banks of the Yealm and the Erme and to the exquisite Devonshire lanes where they had been wont to wander hand in hand together—lanes bordered by banks of pale green ferns, while the golden apples hung in clusters overhead.

Isolated now amid the different worlds in which each lived, these two were tenderly true to each other, at those years when they who have been boy and girl lovers usually forget, or form new attachments.

Florian was struck by a certain confusion in the letter of Dulcie, which seemed to have been written in haste and under the pressure of some excitement, so that at times it was almost incoherent.

'I am not superstitious, as you know, dearest Florian, but I dislike the brilliant month of June more than any month in the year,' she wrote. 'Papa died in June, leaving me alone in the world and so poor—hence I have always strange forebodings of unseen evils to come—evils that I may be powerless to avert; thus June is ever associated in my mind with sorrow, death, and mystery. It is then I have restless nights and broken dreams of trouble haunting me—even of hideous forms seen dimly, and I leave my pillow in the morning more weary than when I laid my head upon it at night. It is June again, and I am in trouble now.'

She proceeded then to describe her persecution by Shafto, who was again returning after an absence; that his presence, conjoined to the taunts, suspicions, and tone of Lady Fettercairn, made life at Craigengowan a burden to her, and that she had determined on flight from the house—from Scotland indeed—but where she was to go, or what she was to do, she

knew not. She had resolved not even to consult her only friend Finella, so that, by the time her letter reached him, she would be out once again on the bosom of the cold world !

So ended this distressing and partly incoherent letter, which was the *last* Florian received from Dulcie Carlyon, and by the tenor of it there seemed a futility in sending any reply to Craigengowan, as too probably she must have left it some weeks ago.

'If killed to-day or to-morrow—anyway, before Cetewayo is caught—I'll never know, probably, *how* my darling gets over her trouble,' thought Florian simply but sadly.

There came by the same post no letter for the absent Hammersley, so Florian concluded that Finella Melfort must have seen through the medium of the public prints that he had sailed for Europe on sick-leave.

It was vain for him to imagine where and amid what surroundings Dulcie was now, and doubtless with very limited means ; it was a source of absolute agony to him at such a time, when he was so helpless, so totally unable to assist or advise her, and he seemed as in a dream to see the camp, with its streets of white tents and soldiers in thousands loitering about, or stretched on the grass, laughing, chatting, and smoking in the sunshine.

In the immediate foreground, on the branch of a tree, hung the skinned carcase of an eland, from which a powerfully built Hottentot of the Natal Contingent, all nude save a pair of breeches, was cutting large slices with a huge knife, and dropping them into Madras cowrie-baskets prior to cooking them in small coppers half full of mealies.

A rich plain stretched away to the north ; beyond it were mountains covered with grass and dotted by clumps of trees, and in some that grew close by the camp, numbers of beautiful squirrels were hopping from branch to branch in the sunshine.

Ulundi was now only sixteen miles distant from our outposts, and from thence came the last messengers of Cetewayo, bringing with them as a peace-offering the sword of the Prince Imperial—the sword worn by his father, too probably at Sedan,

with a secret message—written by Cornelius Vign, the Dutch trader—to Lord Chelmsford, telling him that if he advanced on Ulundi to do it with strength, as the forces of Cetewayo were many, many thousands strong.

On the 1st of July the division marched again.

Florian had been scouting with his squadron all the preceding day and far into the night, and lay in his tent weary and fagged on a ground sheet only, without taking off either accoutrements or regimentals. There, though worn, he had dreams, not of Dulcie, but of his dead comrade, jovial Bob Edgehill, and the little song the latter was wont to sing came to his dreaming ears :

‘ Merrily lads, so ho !  
Some talk of a life at sea ;  
But a life on the land,  
With sword in hand,  
Is the life, my lads, for me.’

Then he started up as he heard trumpet and drum announcing the ‘ turn out’—the latter with the long and continued roll there is no mistaking. A hasty breakfast was taken—scalding coffee drank standing beside the camp-fires—the tents were struck, the waggon-teams were inspanned, the Mounted Infantry went cantering to the front, and the march was begun.

Beautiful though the district looked when viewed from Entonjaneni, the country to be traversed proved a rugged one, covered with tall reed-like grass of giant height, that swayed slowly in the wind, interspersed with mimosa scrub and enormous cacti, with leaves like sabre-blades ; but by half-past one a.m. the White Umvolosi was reached.

More scouting in a dark and moonless night fell to the lot of Buller’s Horse and Florian’s Mounted Infantry. They could hear the war-song of the vast Zulu army—unseen in the darkness, but chiefly posted at fords on the river, loading the still, dewy air, rising and falling with wild, weird, and impressive effect, now apparently near, now distant ; but so mighty ever and anon was the volume of sound that it seemed to corroborate the alarming message of Cornelius Vign. Among other sounds



were the awful shrieks of a dying prisoner, whom they had impaled on the bank of the stream.

Much scouting, scampering about, and skirmishing by 'bank, bush, and scaur' followed for three days, and the 4th of July saw the division on its way to fight the great and final battle of the war, before Wolseley could come on the ground—Ulundi.

The sun was well up in the sky, when the column crossed the river at a point where sweet-scented bushes, graceful acacias, gigantic convolvuli, and wild guava fringed its banks, where the bees were humming, and the Kaffir vultures hovering over the slain of a recent skirmish; and splendid was its aspect in the brilliant morning light—the 17th Lancers with their striking uniform and 'pennoned spears, a stately grove'—the infantry, not clad in hideous 'mud-suits,' but in their glorious scarlet, their polished bayonets and barrels shining in the sun, while in the hollows under the shadows of the great mountains, shadows into which the light of day had scarcely penetrated as yet, the impis or columns of the Zulus were gathering in their sombre and savage thousands.

'The troops will form in hollow square!' was now the General's order, and, with other aides-de-camp, Villiers, cigar in mouth, and with flushed cheek and brightening eye, went cantering along the marching column, with the details of that formation for the advance—the first instance of such a movement in modern war, since William Wallace of Elderslie, the uncrowned King of Scotland, instituted such a system at the battle of Falkirk, and consequently he, as Green tells us in his 'History of the English People,' was actually the first founder of 'that unconquerable British Infantry,' before which the chivalry of Europe went down.

As formed by Lord Chelmsford on that eventful 4th of July, the infantry on the four sides of his oblong square marched in sections of fours, with all cavalry and other mounted men scouring the front and flanks, Shepstone's Basutos covering the rear, with the cannon in the acute angles of three faces of the square; all waggons and carts, with stores and ammunition, in the centre.

This was about eight in the morning, and with colours flying and bands playing merrily in the sunshine, this huge human rectangle marched in a north-easterly direction, past two great empty kraals and a vast green tumulus that marks the grave of King Panda, the father of Cetewayo, who is seated therein, buried in a partly upright position, according to Zulu custom.

To the right of the marching square were hills covered with thorn trees overlooking the White Umvolosi; to its left were other hills covered with enormous loose stones, and in its rear was a rugged country tufted with mimosa trees, and others that stood up with feather-like foliage against the blue-green sky. And in the centre of a species of natural amphitheatre stood three military kraals of vast extent, the principal being named Ulundi.

At the extremity of this amphitheatre there was visible a long line of oval-shaped shields, above which black heads and bright points appeared—the Zulu impi marching forward in double column with a cloud of skirmishers on their front and flanks, precisely according to European tactics.

The square was halted now, the ranks closed up, all facing outwards; the rifles and cannon were loaded, the ammunition boxes opened, and two of the kraals were set in flames by the Irregular Horse; but one was extinguished, lest the dense smoke from it rolling across the plain might offer a cover for the Zulu advance.

To lure them on, Florian was sent with twenty Mounted Infantry, and, on seeing so petty a force riding towards them, the enemy wheeled back a portion of their front as a trap.

‘Come on, lads!’ cried Florian, brandishing his sword, ‘come on!—though not a man of us may return!’ he thought.

But the twenty men only poured in a rifle-fire, wheeled about by fours, and, galloping back, won the shelter of the square, the four faces of which were fringed by steel and garlanded with jets of fire and smoke, while the roar of artillery shook the air, and high overhead was heard the fierce rush of the red rockets as they were shot into the royal kraal of Ulundi and fired it in many places.

With the rest of the mounted men, Florian stood in the centre of the square, holding his horse by the bridle and looking quietly about him, and, like the rest, his heart beat high, every pulse was quickened, and the excitement became intense, as the long, long horns of the Zulu army in its thousands closed round the square; and as the circle contracted and came within closer range it was a splendid and thrilling but terrible sight to see the masses mowed down like swathes of grass beneath a mighty scythe.

The British troops were formed in ranks four deep, two kneeling as if to receive cavalry, the rifle-butt placed against the right knee, and two erect, firing steadily, all with bayonets fixed; and in this dense formation, sad indeed would have been our casualties had the Zulu fire been well-delivered.

Closing upon their skirmishers rather than permitting the latter to fall back upon their lines, their attack embraced the four faces of the vast hollow square, now shrouded with white whirling smoke, and edged by glittering fire and flashing steel. Out of the dark masses that were pouring on came bullets of every calibre, from the sharp pinging cone of the Martini-Henry to the heavy whirring charge of the long-elephant gun, and many a man and many a horse were wounded and done to death thereby. The old Zulu tactics were pursued; the attack was ever augmented by fresh bodies of infuriated savages, with the same dire results to them; while all their devotion and desperation could rarely carry them past the verge of the cloud of smoke enveloping the square; and thus, of the thousands who came on, only hundreds remained to waver or prolong the attack.

Whole crowds of naked and sombre forms seemed to lie as if suddenly struck dead, each man where he stood; and it was so. Some, however, succeeded in flinging their bare breasts upon the bayonet points, and, with dying grasp on the rifle-muzzles, went down almost at the feet of the front rank men, fierce, stern, fearless to the last, their white teeth set, their eyeballs gleaming like those of exasperated fiends, and their yells rending the air.



‘Steady, men, steady,’ the officers were heard to cry again and again ; ‘fire low—low, and not so fast !’

Drury Lowe was unhorsed by a spent bullet, but vaulted into his saddle again. Eight companies of the Perthshire Light Infantry, flanked by seven and nine-pounder guns in one face of the square, fought well and valiantly, though young soldiers, and in physique unlike those of whom Sir Francis Head wrote when at Paris in 1815, when he stated ‘that a body of Scottish Highlanders or Lowlanders, standing shoulder to shoulder, stretched over more ground than a similar number of inhabitants, soldier or civilian, of any other nation in Europe.’

The coolness of the men amid this close strife, while the dead and dying fell about them fast, was wonderful, the doctors attending the latter ; and in several instances the former, ere they were cold, were buried to save time, while the chaplain stood by to read the burial-service amid a tempest of bullets.

‘Have a cigar?’ said an officer of the Perthshire Light Infantry, seeing that Florian was somewhat ‘blown’ after his scamper from the front to the shelter of the now environed square.

‘Thanks,’ said he, selecting one from the speaker’s silver case : but ere the latter could give Florian a light, a ponderous knobkerie, flung with superhuman force at random—the last force, perhaps, of some dying savage—smashed his head to pulp in his tropical helmet as completely as a half-spent cannon-ball would have done, and covered Florian with a sickening mess of blood and brains together.

In imitation of the British formation, a skilful Zulu Induna formed his men in a hollow square and hurled them like a mighty wave, with piercing war-cries and unearthly yells, upon that angle of the great square where six companies were posted under a Crimean veteran of the Scots Fusiliers, with two nine-pounder guns. The fight here became hand-to-hand, bayonet against assegai, and many a shield, by main strength of arm, was dashed against the breasts and faces of our men ; but speedily the Zulu square was broken, rolled up, and the sur-

vivors of it fled, stumbling as they ran over their own fallen and the blood-soaked ground on which the latter writhed and weltered.

Under the sweeping fire of the Gatlings they went down as forest leaves do before the last blasts of autumn, and in thirty minutes from the first opening of our infantry fire they were falling back in disorganised masses, which speedily, under the storm of shells, took the form of one vast mob in wild and helpless flight, while the cavalry were ordered in pursuit, and with a loud cheer the 17th unslung their lances, and by fours led the way through an opening made for them in the rear face of the square. The Dragoon Guards, Buller's Horse, and Florian's Mounted Infantry followed in quick succession.

'Front, form troop!' was the first cavalry order.

'Form squadron—form line—gallop—*charge!*' rang out the trumpets, as, sweeping round on their left pivots, the Horse took the formations indicated, and then, with the united force of some dread and terrible engine, fell swooping down upon the foe, hewing through the shrinking walls of brave human flesh, after the lances were relegated to the sling and swords were drawn.

It was a terrible sight to see how, on right and left, these now red sword-blades were plied, every man rising in his stirrups to give deadlier impetus to his stroke, even when the shrapnel shells, fired with time-fuses, were exploding amid the foe. From the latter there came no cry for mercy or for quarter; they looked for none, as they would have given none; and all who escaped the slaughter of the pursuit did so by winning the crests of some hills, where horses could not follow them, and from which they opened a lively fire of musketry.

Florian went on in this work like one in a wild, bad dream; and it was only when the halt was sounded, followed by the order, 'Fours about—retire,' that he became quite aware of all he had escaped, had undergone and done, and how mechanically he had hewed about him—when he found the blade of his sword, even his fingers, stained with blood, and the sleeves of his tunic all ripped and burst under the shoulders by the exertions he had used.

Tom Tyrrell came out of the strife with his helmet gone, his head bandaged by a bloody handkerchief, and his horse's flanks bleeding from three assegais that stuck in them; but this was the case with several others.

It is remarkable that after the battle of Ulundi not *one* wounded Zulu was found on the field. Of all the hundreds upon hundreds who lay there helpless, every man of them had been despatched in cold blood by our native allies.

The power of the nation had departed from it now; and as for Cetewayo, he fled from Ulundi the day *before* the battle; and after the latter event his army began to melt away, as the warriors returned to their distant kraals, hopeless, and sick of the war.

That named Ulundi was given to the flames by the Irregulars and Mounted Infantry, and its ten thousand dome-roofed huts all blazing at once presented a striking spectacle; and after that event the Second Division and Flying Column began their rearward march to the camp at the Entonjaneni Mountain, to effect a junction with the First Division under General Crealock.

To Florian, as to many others, after the fever of battle had passed away, there came the usual revulsion of spirit that follows excitement so intense, and the keen thirst after that excitement and exertion so great, with the philosophical and not unnatural emotion of wonder as to 'what it all had been about, and to what end this terrible slaughter and suffering!'

And he thought of the strange interments of some of the dead in that hollow square when under fire—young soldiers, instinct with boyish, hopeful, and glorious life, ardour and valour, struck down in death, and huddled into a ghastly hole, over which the bullets swept, ere their limbs were cold. 'Death is a surprise—a woful and terrible surprise—whenever it comes, even though we be by the bedside watching for it, dreading it, as each breath leaves the lips we love.' But death seemed thus doubly grim on that day at Ulundi!

The troops found their tents ready pitched awaiting them at the camp beside the mountain, and a welcome shelter they



proved, as the rearward march had been performed under drenching torrents of rain.

Stormy and windy was the night of the 6th of July, the second after the battle, and for some days and nights subsequent the falling rain rendered all operations impossible, and added greatly to the sufferings of the wounded, causing also a serious mortality among the cavalry horses and commissariat oxen.

Mail after mail came into camp as usual, bringing letters, some for the poor fellows who lay under the sod at Ulundi, but there were no more letters from Dulcie now for Florian, and none from Hammersley, whom he naturally supposed to be too ill to write by a passing ship outward bound.

The letter he had received shortly before the action at Ulundi was, as stated, the last he ever had from Dulcie, and her sudden and singular silence deepened his distress and anxiety.

What had happened? Was she ill, or well? How was she situated, and where? These thoughts occurred to him in endless iteration amid his military duties, which were not dull routine, but, so far as the pursuit of the fugitive King Cetawayo was concerned, were arduous, full of excitement and perils of various kinds.

His heart grew heavy, and his future, so far as it was connected with Dulcie Carlyon, seemed dark and uncertain, like the episodes of a dream. But it has been said that most life-histories leave hanging threads that may only be completed in the great web woven by eternity, and eternity had often been perilously close to Florian of late.

Dulcie was the only link he had in life—she seemed to him as friend, sister, and sweetheart, all in one.

---

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## DISAPPEARANCE OF DULCIE.

SINCE the reader last saw Dulcie Carlyon she had become chilled and changed in manner, under the influence of Lady Fettercairn's bearing and remarks, to all save Finella. All her natural jollity and *espièglerie* of way were gone, and every hour that it was possible to do so she spent in the seclusion of her own room, one high up in a square turret of the old house, with windows that opened to a far vista of the Howe of the Mearns, terminated by a glimpse of the German Sea.

Here she was sometimes joined by Finella, who could no longer persuade her to ramble as of old in the grounds, and never again to accompany her in the saddle when she took Fern for a spin along the country roads.

'Are you not sick of crewel-work, and embroidering sage birds of shapes that never existed, upon brown bath-towels?' asked Finella. 'I know you do it by grandmamma's wish; but what tasteless folly it is!'

'I would rather, as I did at home, knit stockings for the poor,' said Dulcie.

'Better buy than knit them,' responded the heiress, 'and so save one's self a world of trouble.'

It became too evident to Dulcie that the time of her dismissal from Craigengowan was drawing nigh; that it was only delayed by the absense of Shafto in Edinburgh, and she resolved, ere he returned, to get the balance of her little salary and quit the place, as it had now become odious to her.

Dulcie had old Welsh blood in her veins, and more than once had she heard her father, Lewellen Carlyon, whose one ewe-lamb she was, descant on how he could count kith and kin into the remotest past, when his forefathers wandered through the forest of Caerlyon—whence his name—had manned Offa's Dyke, and shared the perils of Owain Glendwr. To speak of

such things now, even to Finella, seemed to the girl vain folly, but they were keenly in her heart nevertheless.

And so there came an evening, the last she was to spend under the steep slate roof of Craigengowan.

Lady Fettercairn was going for a drive among the summer roads that were all like leafy tunnels or long avenues of foliage, to visit that famous senator, Lord Macowkay, who was then at his country house of Middyn Grange, and Finella, perceiving how pale Dulcie was looking, said :

‘May Miss Carlyon come with us, grandmamma?’

‘Certainly not,’ replied Lady Fettercairn, with hauteur and asperity, though Dulcie was within hearing, carrying Snap in his satin-lined basket. ‘When is this sort of thing to end, Finella?’

There came a time when the Lady of that Ilk recalled this remark, and many others similar, for just then she did not see certainly where the future was to end.

So the two ladies drove away, and Dulcie, for companionship, though then unaware that it would be for the last time, took tea with the kindly old housekeeper, whom she found busy in her pantry and closets preparing for that social meal; and Dulcie helped her to cut and butter the bread, polish the cups and saucers and old silver spoons, to arrange the brown tea-cakes, crisp biscuits, and luscious Scottish preserves of home manufacture, and all the while a sadness oppressed her, for which she could not account.

This, however, seemed explained when, at dinner that evening, Lady Fettercairn said, while returning a letter to her pocket :

‘Shafto returns late to-night—or early to-morrow morning.’

‘From where?’ asked Finella, though, sooth to say, she cared little where from.

‘Edinburgh.’

‘And not an hour too soon, I am afraid,’ said Lord Fettercairn, with his sandy-grey eyebrows deeply knitted.

No one asked ‘why,’ so a silence ensued, and a little later in the evening Finella said to Dulcie :

‘Why are you so silent to-night?’



‘Am I so?’

‘Yes—even sad—*triste*.’

‘Sad—you don’t mean cross?’

‘No, Dulcie dear, you never are cross.’

‘I am full of very weary thoughts, and wish to retire, if Lady Fettercairn can spare me,’ she added, raising her voice.

‘Of course—go,’ replied the latter; and Dulcie, painfully conscious that her employer had been more than usually cold, hard, and even bitter to her—all, no doubt, *à propos* of Shafto’s return—bowed and murmured ‘Good-night,’ with a soft and lingering glance at Finella.

Shafto returning! Dulcie was always nervous about his future conduct and her own position, and she could not prepare herself again for dissembling in public and hating in private—for the inevitable meetings at table and elsewhere. Over and above all was the dread that by his intense cunning he might work her mischief—a mischief that to her might prove social ruin.

Dulcie had writhed and winced under all Lady Fettercairn’s not always delicately veiled hints as to the social gulf that separated people *and* people—to wit, Miss Melfort of Craigen-gowan and the paid companion, and of young folks of bad taste and little discretion, who were inclined to step out of their proper sphere; she knew the drift of all this; her heart swelled within her, and now she withdrew with a stern and perhaps rash resolve that took active form on the morrow.

In the corridor before they separated for the night, Finella thought that Dulcie kissed and clasped her with more than usual tenderness and effusion, and became aware that there were tears on the girl’s cheek; but this had been too often the case of late to excite remark.

However, she remembered this emotion with some pain at a future time.

In the morning the then small circle of Craigengowan assembled in the charming breakfast-room. Shafto had not come overnight; Lord Fettercairn had not opened his letters, but—though nothing of a politician—was idling over a paper which the butler had cut and aired for him.

Lady Fettercairn glanced at a handsome antique French clock upon the grey marble mantelpiece, and said, with as much irritation as she ever permitted herself to show with reference to Dulcie :

‘Not down yet—when she knows that she has to preside at the tea-urn and so forth ! Is she giving herself the airs of a lady of—what is the matter ?’ she exclaimed, as a servant whom she had despatched on an errand of inquiry returned looking somewhat discomposed. ‘I hope she is not ill, especially with anything infectious ?’

‘No, my lady—not ill.’

‘Not ill—that is fortunate.’

‘No.’

‘Where then is she—why not here ?’

‘She isn’t there, my lady.’

‘There—where ?’

‘In her room—nor anywhere in the house.’

Finella remembered the peculiar bearing of Dulcie the previous night, and her tremulous sisterly kiss, with a species of pang, and hurried upstairs to the square turret-room.

‘Of course *she* is interested !’ said Lady Fettercairn, scoffingly.

‘There is always an exuberant vitality—a great flow of animal spirits about Finella,’ replied her husband.

‘All of which I deem hoydenish and bad form.’

Finella returned, looking pale and scared, to report that Miss Carlyon’s bed did not appear to have been slept in last night, that her wardrobe was all tumbled about, leaving evident traces of selections and packing, and that to all appearance she was gone from the house.

‘Gone—then I hope it is not with Shafto !’ exclaimed Lady Fettercairn, paling at her own idea.

‘Scarcely : is he not coming here, as his letter yesterday announces ?’ said Lord Fettercairn.

‘Gone—and in that rude and uncereemonious, and certainly most mysterious manner, which through local gossip will find its way in some odious mode into every local paper !’ said

Lady Fettercairn, while she grimly directed Finella to officiate at the tea-board.

‘She is away, poor thing, without a doubt,’ said the butler, who was carving at the side-board ; ‘and must have left the house by the conservatory door—I found it open this morning.’

‘I hope that she has not——’ but even Lady Fettercairn, while surmising mentally whether her jewel-case was all intact, had not the hardihood to put the cruel suspicion in words.

‘It is most annoying,’ said the peer, with his noble mouth full.

‘Very—she was souseful too—very—with all her faults,’ added Lady Fettercairn, tenderly caressing Snap, who was relegated to a housemaid for his morning bath.

She did not expect an escapade of this sort ; the great luxury of the certain dismissal had been denied her ; she sank back in her chair for a minute or so, and sniffed languidly at her gold-topped scent-bottle, as if nerving herself to hear something horrible, while the grounds were searched for traces of the fugitive ; and she had ideas of having the Swans’ Pool and the adjacent stream dragged.

Finella thought she would like to run away too ; but with all her wealth it was less easy for an heiress of position to do so than for the poor and nameless companion ; and now that Dulcie was gone, Finella felt that the link between herself and Hammersley was cut off.

Apart from that important item in her life, she was deeply sorry, as she had conceived for Dulcie one of those sudden and so-called undying friendships for which, we are told, ‘the female heart is specially remarkable.’

Finella felt that the cold and inquiring eyes of Lady Fettercairn were upon her, and knew that, if she would not excite remark and draw reprehension upon herself, breakfast must be partaken of, even though her heart was breaking. So she bathed her eyes, re-smoothed her hair, and took her place at the table with as much composure as she could assume.

‘If her flight is not traced—though why we should care to



trace it I don't know,' said Lady Fettercairn bitterly, 'and if her body is not found, we may conclude that she has eloped with some low lover. I hope all the grooms, gardeners, game-keepers, and so forth, are to be seen in their places,' she added; 'and with all her faults, in appearance and style she was a great improvement upon Mrs. Prim, with her iron-grey hair arranged in corkscrew curls on each side of her face.'

Finella thought so too. Lord Fettercairn thought his better-half had been latterly too severe upon the poor little companion, but did not venture to say so.

---

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### FLIGHT.

'Go I must,' murmured Dulcie, when in the solitude of her own room she said her nightly prayers on her knees. 'I cannot help it. I may come to want bread by the step I am about to take, but better death than enduring this system of mortification and degradation.'

She had received her slender quarterly allowance some time before that crisis, and as yet luckily none of it had been spent. How small a sum it looked to face the world with!

She packed and prepared all her clothes, intending to write to the housekeeper for them when she found another home. In an ample Gladstone bag she placed carefully all that was requisite for her immediate need, and, weary with rapid exertion and heavy thought, laid her head on the pillow of a sofa, fearing to undress or trust herself in bed, lest a deep sleep might fall upon her.

All was silent in the great house, and no sound broke the stillness of the warm summer night save when some dog bayed at the moon from the quadrangle of the stableyard.

Midnight struck on a great and sonorous clock in an adjacent corridor; anon a little French clock on her chimney-

piece chimed out two on its silver bell, but no sleep came to Dulcie's eyes, nor did she desire to court it.

Her mind was full of rambling fancies. She thought of her parents lying so peacefully side by side in old Revelstoke churchyard, within sound of the sobbing sea, and of what their emotions would have been could they have foreseen all that was before her of doubt and unhappiness; and with the memory of them she tenderly turned over some withered leaves that lay in a little prayer-book Mr. Pentreath had given her, and while doing so recalled the sweet lines that seemed so *à propos* of them:

‘Only a bunch of withered leaves,  
Brought by a stranger's hand,  
But they grew on a spot she dearly loved—  
They bloomed in the dear old land.  
Father and mother lie there at rest  
Beneath the soft emerald sod,  
Under the shelter of the cross,  
And close to the house of God,’

close to the time-worn church of Revelstoke. She thought of Shafto and the thorn he had proved in her path, and felt a satisfaction from the conviction that after this night too probably she would never more look upon his face.

She thought again and again of Florian. Where was he then, and what doing? Too probably sleeping the sleep of the weary and worn, on the bare earth in some tented field, awaiting the coming perils of the morrow; and then with the idea of Finella came fresh tears for parting from the only friend she had.

After three had struck she dressed herself quickly in the costume in which she meant to travel, assured herself that her purse was safe, that her hat, gloves, and sunshade were at hand, and sat down by a window to watch for the earliest streak of dawn.

With all this earnestness of preparation and of purpose she had no settled plan for the future—no very defined one at least; her sole desire was to anticipate the final mortification of dis-

missal, and to get away from the vicinity of Lady Fettercairn, of Shafto, and of Craigengowan.

Save the Rev. Paul Pentreath, far away in her native Devonshire, and the vicar in London through whom he had befriended her, she had no one to whom to look forward, and, save for Florian's sake, she felt at times as if she cared little what became of her. She would reach London, take a little lodging there, and look about her for some employment while her money lasted; and when it was gone—gone, what then?

Again came the thought of Finella, whom she loved with all the passionate earnestness of an impulsive young heart thrust back upon itself, and yearning for friendship and affection. Even with her regard it was impossible that she could stay longer in the same house with him who was now returning—Shafto—even were dismissal not hanging over her. She could but go away; her presence was necessary to no one's happiness, and none would miss her—perhaps not even Finella after a time, for the latter lived in a world—the world of wealth and rank—a sphere apart from that of poor Dulcie Carlyon.

Amid these thoughts she started: dawn was breaking in the east, but the world around her was still involved in gloom and sleep.

How long, long and chill, the night had seemed! yet it was a short and warm one of July, when there is only a total darkness of four hours, especially in a region so far north as the Howe of the Mearns.

Red light stole along the waters of the distant German Sea; it began to tip the hill-tops and crept gradually down into the woods and glens below, where the Bervie, the Finella, and the Cowie brawled on their way to the ocean.

As one in a dream, she sat for a little time watching the dawn till the light of the half-risen sun was streaming over the tree-tops and through the parted curtains of her windows, when she started up with all the resolution she had taken overnight yet full in her mind.

With rapid and trembling fingers she assumed the last details of her travelling costume, smoothed her golden hair,



gave a final glance at herself in the mirror, and saw how pale and unslept she looked after her past night's vigil, tied her veil tightly across her face, fitted on her gloves with accuracy, took her travelling bag, and with a prayer on her lips prepared to go out into the world—alone !

The clustering roses and clematis were about the windows of the square turret-room, notwithstanding its great height from the ground ; the birds were twittering among them, and diamond dewdrops gemmed every leaf.

Light and shadowy clouds of mist, exhaled upwards by the early morning sun, hung about the summit of Moelmannoch and other hills, and in the sunshine the insect world was all astir : the bees were already abroad, and the blackbirds were hopping about the gravelled terraces. To Dulcie it seemed that they at least were at home.

She leaned for a moment out of the window and drank—for the last time—a deep draught of the pure air that came from the lovely Scottish landscape over which her eyes wandered, as it stretched away down the fertile and peaceful Howe of the Mearns, the corn deepening into gold, the picturesque houses, luxuriant orchards and gardens ; and she bade to each and all farewell, with little regret, perhaps, for with all their beauty they were too intimately associated with the idea of Lady Fettercairn and many a humiliation.

Opening her room-door she stole swiftly down the great carpeted staircase, passed through the drawing-rooms into the conservatory, the door of which she knew she could unlock more easily than that of the great door which opened to the *porte cochère*. There was no one yet astir in all that numerous household, so, hurrying across the dewy lawn, she turned her face resolutely towards the station, where she knew she would reach the early Aberdeen train for the South.

The country highway was deserted ; she met no one but a gamekeeper returning from a night's watch, perhaps, with his gun under his arm. She thought he looked at her curiously as she passed him, sorely weighted by her travelling bag, but he did not address her ; and so without other adventures she

reached the little wayside station of Craigengowan just as the gates were being unclosed, and, quickly securing her ticket, retired to the seclusion of the waiting-room.

Her heart had but one aching thought—the parting with Finella.

In her pride and indignation we must admit that Dulcie, ever a creature of impulse, was not acting judiciously. She had not stopped to ask a letter of recommendation—‘character,’ she mentally and bitterly phrased it—from Lady Fettercairn; neither had she risked the opposition and kind advice of Finella, but had thus left her present life of irritation and humiliation to rush into a new and unknown world, that now, even when she had barely crossed the Rubicon, was beginning, as she sat in the lonely and empty wayside station, to chill and dismay her.

‘In the future that is before me, whom am I to trust in again? How *am* I to fight the world’s battle alone?’ she was beginning to think, even while the clanking train for the South came sweeping across the echoing Howe.

Ay, she so pure, so artless, so unsuspecting of evil in others!

At last she was in the train and off. She gave one long farewell glance at the lofty turrets of haunted Craigengowan, because Finella was there, and felt that never again would they ramble together by Queen Mary’s Thorn, the Swans’ Pool, the old gate through which the fated Lord rode forth to battle, or by the old ruined Castle of Fettercairn with all its legends.

Dulcie experienced a kind of relief in the swiftness of the speed with which the express train flew past station after station, outstripping the wind apparently; villages and thatched farms were seen and gone; trees, bridges, ruined towers, those features so common in the Scottish landscape, fields and hedgerows, swept rearward, telegraph wires seemed to sink and rise and twist themselves in one, the poles apparently pursuing each other in the fury of the pace.

Now it was Arbroath, where the train paused for a little time—Arbroath with its mills, tall chimneys, and substantial houses, amid which tower the remains of that noble abbey which held

the bones of William the Lion, with its huge round window, for seven hundred years a landmark from the sea; anon came Broughty Craig with its ancient tower, under the walls of which has been shed the blood of English, French, and Germans, with Dundee, 'the gift of God,' amid the haze of its manufactories, to the westward.

Here a kindly old railway guard—who whilom as a 1st Royal Scot had shed his blood at Alma and Inkermann—taking pity on the pale and weary girl, brought her a cup of warm tea from the buffet, and, as he said, 'a weel-buttered bap, ye ken,' and most acceptable they were.

A little time and her train was sweeping through Fife, and she saw the woods of Falkland—those lovely woods wherein 'the bonnie Earl of Gowrie' flirted with Anne of Denmark. Soon Cupar was left behind, and the Eden, flowing through its green and fertile valley; and then, worn with the vigil of the past night and her own heavy thoughts, Dulcie fell asleep, without the coveted satisfaction of a dream of Florian or Finella.

---

## CHAPTER L.

### A STARTLING LETTER.

THE step taken by Dulcie was a source of great mortification to Lady Fettercairn.

She regretted that she had not anticipated such an unforeseen event by dismissal. Visitors, she knew, would miss the bright-faced, golden-haired English girl who—when permitted—played with such good execution, and sang so well and sweetly; and Lady Fettercairn could not, with a clear conscience, say that she had given her her *congé*, or why.

'Miss Carlyon has put me in a most awkward position,' she said querulously; 'her conduct has been most unprincipled, in leaving me this abruptly, before I could look about me for a



substitute ; and I think Mr. Kippilaw might be instructed to prosecute her criminally. Don't you think so, Fettercairn ?

But the peer only smiled faintly, and applied himself to another egg.

Ere breakfast was over another event occurred. Shafto appeared suddenly at table. He had heard of Dulcie Carlyon's absence or flight, and was in no way surprised by the occurrence.

'You are just in time, Shafto dear,' said Lady Fettercairn, with one of her made-up smiles ; 'tea or coffee ?'

'Tea,' said he curtly, as Finella took the silver teapot, Shafto all the while looking as if he would rather have had a stiff and well-iced glass of brandy and soda, for he had a crushed and weary aspect.

'We thought you would be here last night,' said Lady Fettercairn.

'Why ?' asked Shafto, who seemed inclined to deal in monosyllables.

'Your letter led us to expect you.'

'Did it ?'

'Yes.'

'Well—I missed the last train.'

'You always do,' said Lord Fettercairn somewhat pointedly.

'Ah,' thought Shafto, 'the old fellow's liver is out of order, and gout threatening, of course—a bad look-out for me.'

On that morning he did not like the expression of Lord Fettercairn's face, so he resolved to defer speaking of his 'affairs' till a future time ; but in a little space, as we shall show, the chance was gone for throwing himself, as he had thought to do, 'on the mercy' of either Lord or Lady Fettercairn.

The evening before he had been among a set of very different people—flashily dressed roughs returning from a local race-course, their dirty hands over be-jewelled, with foul pipes and fouler language in their mouths, speeding hither and thither by train in search of pigeons to pluck, with their jargon of backing

the favourite, making up books, and playing shilling Nap and Poker by the dim light of the carriage lamp, while inbibing strong waters from flasks of all sorts and sizes.

What a contrast they presented to his present refined surroundings, with Finella standing out among them, so pure, so patrician, and so exquisitely lady-like; and in attendance upon him, with hands that were white as alabaster—Finella, fresh and fragrant as a white moss-rose, attired in a most ‘fetching’ morning costume, to the feminine eye suggestive of Regent Street.

Lord Fettercairn now addressed himself to the task of opening his letters, after the contents of the household post-bag had been distributed round the table by that rubicund priest of Silenus, old Mr. Grapeston, the butler.

There were several blue envelopes for Shafto, which—with an unuttered malediction on his lips—he thrust unopened into the pocket of his tweed morning-coat.

Among his letters Lord Fettercairn received one which seemed to startle him so much that, ignoring all the rest, he read it again and again, his sandy grey eyebrows becoming more and more knitted, and the colour going and coming in his now withered cheek, as Shafto, who was watching him very closely, could plainly see. He seemed certainly very perturbed, and tossed aside all his other letters, as if their contents could be of no consequence compared with those of this particular missive.

‘Your letter seems to disturb you, grandfather,’ said Shafto.

‘It does—it does, indeed.’

‘Sorry to hear it: may I inquire what it is about—or from whom it comes?’

‘It is a letter from Mr. Kippilaw, senior,’ replied Lord Fettercairn, darting from under his shaggy eyebrows, and over the rim of his *pincc-nez*, a glance at Shafto, so keen and inquiring that the latter felt his heart stand still; yet summoning his constitutional insolence to his aid, he asked:

‘And what is the old pump up to now?’

‘Shafto!’ exclaimed Lady Fettercairn, who detested slang.

'He refers to something that may prove very unpleasant,' said the peer, carefully smoothing out the letter.

'To—to me?'

'Yes—and to me, I regret to say, most certainly. He says there are many matters on which he wishes to confer with me personally; among others, "A visit from an old Highland woman, named Madelon Galbraith, a native of Ross-shire, who was nurse to Mr. Lennard's wife in her infancy, and also to their son. Her revelations, conjoined with other things, now startle me, as they are most strange, and must be probed to the bottom." He also says that this woman—Madelon Galbraith—visited Craigengowan in my absence. Did such a visit take place?'

'Yes,' said Lady Fettercairn.

'And she was expelled very roughly.'

'Well—I believe so—rather.'

'Why?'

'Because she was mad or intoxicated—most insolent, at all events,' replied Shafto, with a choking sensation in his throat.

'To you?'

'Yes—to me.'

'Well,' resumed Lord Fettercairn, who evidently seemed very much perturbed, 'she has been with Mr. Kippilaw, as I tell you, and has made some strange revelations requiring immediate and close investigation.'

'May I know what they are?' asked Shafto with a sinking heart, that only rose when spite and hate and fury gathered in it.

'No—you may not, yet,' replied Lord Fettercairn, as he folded up the letter and abruptly left the table; and that same forenoon his lordship took an early train for Edinburgh.

Shafto heard of this with growing alarm, which all the brandy and soda of which he partook freely in the smoking-room, and more than one huge cabana, could not soothe. Though fearing the worst, through Madelon Galbraith, he thought that perhaps in the meantime Kippilaw's business referred to his gambling debts, his bills and promissory notes, and too probably to his



'row with that cad, Garallan,' as he mentally termed the affair of the loaded die.

He rambled long alone in the same stately avenue down which Lennard Melfort had passed so many years before, when, with a gallant heart full of anger, wounded pride, and undeserved sorrow, he turned his back for ever on lordly Craigen-gowan.

There he loitered, full of anxious and most unenviable thoughts, sulkily dragging down his fair moustache; and it has been remarked by physiognomists that good-natured men always twirl their moustache upwards, whereas a morose or suspicious man does just the reverse.

From the avenue he wandered across the lawn and under the trees, like a restless or unquiet spirit, his unpleasant face wearing an uneasy expression, and his eyes, which were seldom raised from the ground, shifted always from side to side.

'I may have to make a clean bolt for it,' he muttered, as Finella came suddenly upon him, and, though detesting him, she was too gentle not to feel some pity for his crushed appearance.

'Shafto, why are you so disturbed?' she asked. 'Of what are you afraid?'

'Of what?' he queried almost savagely.

'Yes.'

'I don't know.'

'Who then can know?'

'I tell you I don't know what to fear, but things are looking infernally dark for me. I am going down the hill at a devil of a pace, and with no skid on.'

'I do not understand your phraseology,' said Finella coldly.

'Understand, then, that many of my troubles lie at your door,' said Shafto, turning abruptly from her, as he thus referred to her aversion to himself and certainly not unnatural preference for Vivian Hammersley, and that much of the money he had raised had been advanced on the chances of his lucrative marriage with her.

'What is about to happen? When will old Fettercairn

return, and in what mood? What the devil *is* up—perhaps by this time?’ thought Shafto, as he resumed his solitary promenade. ‘I would rather face a hundred perils in the light of day, than have one, with a nameless dread, overhanging me in the dark.’

And as he muttered and thought of Madelon Galbraith, his shifty eyes gleamed with that savage expression which comes with a thirst for blood.

Meanwhile Lord Fettercairn, a man of strict honour in his own way, though utterly destitute of patriotism or love of country, was being swept on to Edinburgh by an express train; he was full of bitter thoughts, vexation, pain, even grief and shame, for all that Shafto was evidently bringing upon his house and home.

He had secured, he thought, an heir to his ill-gotten title and estates, and with that knowledge would ever have to drain the bitter cup of disappointment to the dregs.

Finella never doubted that, owing to their great mutual regard, Dulcie would write to her, and tell of her own welfare, safety, and prospects; but weary, long, and solitary days passed on and became weeks, and Dulcie never did so. She had perhaps nothing pleasant to relate of herself, and thus the tenor or spirit of her letters to a friend so rich might be liable to misconstruction. If written, perhaps they were intercepted. So, regarding Shafto and Lady Fettercairn as the mutual cause of the poor girl’s flight, and perhaps destruction, Finella now resolved to leave Craigengowan, and go on a visit to her maternal grandmother, Lady Drumshoddy, then in London, when that matron, having now her favourite nephew with her, began to mature some schemes of her own; but carefully, as she had read that ‘the number of marriages that come to nothing annually because one or other or both of the innocent victims suddenly discover they are being thrown together with *intention*, is inconceivable.’

---

## CHAPTER LI.

## THE PURSUIT OF CETEWAYO.

MAIL after mail came to head-quarters, brought by post-carts and orderlies, from the rear, but they brought no letters from Dulcie Carlyon. So, whether she had, as she threatened she would do, fled from Craigengowan, or remained there, found friends elsewhere with happiness or grief, Florian could not know, and the doubt was a source of torment to him.

Horseback has been considered a famous place for reflection, but one could scarcely find it so when serving as a Mounted Infantry-man, scouting on the outlook for lurking Zulus, with every energy of ear and eye watching donga, boulder, bush, and tuft of reedy grass.

Sir Garnet Wolseley's orders to the army reached the camp of Lord Chelmsford at Entonjaneni on the 8th July, and the latter prepared at once to resign his command and return home.

Two days afterwards, that retrograde movement which so puzzled and elated the Zulus began, and after four days' marching the Second Division and the Flying Column reached Fort Marshall, on the Upoko River, whence a long train of sick and wounded were sent to the village of Ladysmith, in Kanna-land, escorted by two companies of the Scots Fusiliers and Major Bengough's Natives, attired in all their fighting bravery—cowtails, copper anklets and armlets, necklaces of monkeys' teeth, and plumes of feathers.

'Great changes are on the *tapis*,' said Villiers, as he lay on the grass in Florian's tent, smoking, and sharing with him some hard biscuits with 'square-face' and water. 'The 17th Lancers start for India; Newdigate's column is to be broken up, and chiefly to garrison that chain of forts which Chelmsford has so skilfully constructed along the whole Zulu frontier from the Blood River to the Indian Ocean; but Cetewayo is yet to



be captured. Sir Evelyn Wood and the heroic Buller are going home, and so is your humble servant.'

'You—why?' asked Florian.

'Sir Garnet has brought out his entire staff, and I have not the good luck to be one of the Wolseley *ring*,' replied Villiers, with a haughty smile, as he twirled up his moustache and applied himself for consolation to the 'square-face.'

When, on an evening in July, Sir Garnet, with his new staff, amid a storm of wind and rain, rode into the camp of the First Division under General Crealock, the appearance of his party, with their smoothly shaven chins, brilliant new uniforms, and spotless white helmets, formed a strong contrast to the war and weather-worn soldiers of Crealock, in their patched and stained attire, with their unkempt beards; for the use of the razor had long been eschewed in South Africa, where, however, the officers and men of each column trimmed their hirsute appendages after the fashion adopted by their leaders; thus, as General Newdigate affected the style of Henry VIII, so did his troops; Sir Evelyn Wood trimmed his beard in a peak, pointed like Philip II of Spain, and so, we are told, did all the Flying Column.

Sir Garnet Wolseley now arranged his future plans for the final conquest of Zululand, and stationed troops to hold certain lines and rivers, while the rest were formed in two great columns, under Colonels Clarke of the 57th and Baker Russell of the 13th Hussars, two officers of experience, the former having served in Central India and the Maori War, and the latter in the war of the Mutiny, when he covered himself with honours at Kurnaul and elsewhere.

With Clarke's column were five companies of Mounted Infantry, led by Major Barrow, and one of them was led by Florian, who had now earned a high reputation as an active scouting officer.

Clarke's orders were to march northwards and occupy Ulundi, or all that was left of it.

Without the capture of the now luckless Cetewayo, the permanent settlement of the country was deemed impossible;

thus a kind of circle was formed round the district in which he was known to be lurking, to preclude his escape.

The traitor Uhamu, with his followers, occupied a district near the Black Umvolosi; the savage Swazis in thousands under Captain M'Leod held the bank of the Pongola River, armed with heavy lances and knobkerries; Russell advanced on a third quarter, and Clarke on a fourth; thus the sure capture of the fugitive King was deemed only a matter of time.

At a steep rocky hill overhanging the Idongo River the column of the latter, which included three battalions of infantry, was reinforced by five companies of the 80th (or Staffordshire Volunteers), the Natal Pioneers, and two Gatling guns, to which were added two nine-pounders on reaching once more the Entonjaneni Mountain.

It was now reported that Cetewayo had found shelter in a little kraal in the recesses of the Ngome forest, a dense primeval wilderness of giant wood and deep jungle. But the meshes of the net were closing fast around him.

Leaving the main body of his column at a redoubt named Fort George, at the head of only three hundred and forty mounted infantry, Colonel Russell, at daybreak on the 13th of August, rode westward beyond the Black Umvolosi, into a district occupied by many Zulus, in the hope of picking up the royal fugitive.

The scouting advanced guard he entrusted to Florian, whose men rode forward in loose and open formation, with loaded rifles unslung.

The country through which they proceeded was very wild, steep, woody, and rugged, and on seeing how slender his force appeared to be, the Zulus began to gather in numbers, preparatory to disputing his further advance.

'My intention,' said Baker Russell, 'is to reach Umkondo, where Cetewayo is said to be lurking; you will therefore show a bold front and clear the way at all hazards.'

This left Florian no alternative but to fight his opponents, whatever their strength perhaps, and the region into which they were now penetrating had the new and most unusual

danger of being infested by lions, as the 1st King's Dragoon Guards found to their cost.

Manning a narrow gorge fringed with thornwood trees and date palms, with brandished rifle and assegai and their grey shields uplifted in defiance, a strong body of the enemy appeared, led by a tall and powerful-looking chief, whose large armlets and anklets of burnished copper shone in the evening sunshine, and it was but too evident that, under his auspices, mischief was at hand.

That they remarked Florian was an officer was too apparent, when two shots were fired from each flank of the gorge but these whistled harmlessly past, and starred with white a boulder in his rear.

'Pick off that fellow who is making himself so prominent,' said Florian, with some irritation, as his two escapes were narrow ones.

One of the 24th fired and missed the leader.

'What distance did you sight your rifle at?' asked Florian.

'Four hundred yards, sir,' replied the soldier.

'Absurd! He is certainly six hundred yards off. Do you try, Tyrrell.'

Then Tom, who was a deadly shot, reined up, held his rifle straight between his horse's ears, sighted at six hundred yards, and pressing the butt firmly against his right shoulder and restraining his breath, took aim steadily at the chief, who stood prominently on a fragment of rock, his figure defined clearly against the blue sky like that of a dark bronze statue.

He fired; the bullet pierced the Zulu's forehead, as was afterwards discovered; he fell backward and vanished from sight.

'By Jove, he's knocked over, sir,' said Tom, with a quiet laugh, as he dropped another cartridge into his breech-block, and closed it with a snap.

'Bravo, Tom—a good shot!' said the men of the 24th, while, with a yell of rage that reverberated in the gorge, the Zulus fled, and Florian's scouting party rode on at a canter, and ultimately reached a deserted German mission station at a place called Rhinstorf.



As they rode through the gorge, with the indifference that is born of war and its details, Tom Tyrrell looked with perfect composure on the man he had shot, and remarked to Florian, with a smile :

'These Zulus are certainly one of the connecting links that old Darwin writes about, but links with the devil himself, I think.'

At the station of Rhinstorf Colonel Russell now ascertained that fully thirty-five miles of wild and rugged country would have to be traversed ere he could reach Umkondo, where Cetewayo was reported to be in concealment. To add to the difficulties of proceeding further, night had fallen, the native guide, having lost heart, had deserted, and many of the horses had fallen lame by the roughness of the route from Fort George ; thus Baker Russell came to the conclusion that to proceed further then would be rash, if not impossible.

Cetewayo still resisted all the terms offered him, acting under the influence of Dabulamanzi, who urged him to distrust the British, in the hope that if the fugitive died of despair in the forest of Ngome, he himself might succeed to the throne of the Zulus.

While on this patrol duty our Mounted Infantry came upon the remains of some of our fellows who had fallen after the attack on the Inhlobane Mountain in March and lain unburied for nearly six months, exposed to the weather and the Kaffir vultures.

---

## CHAPTER LII.

### AT THE 'RAG.'

WE now turn to a very different scene and locality—to Regent Street, still deemed the architectural *chef d'œuvre* of the celebrated Mr. Nash, though it is all mere brick and plaster.

The London season was past and over, but one would hardly have thought so, as the broad pavements seemed still so

crowded, and so many vehicles of every kind were passing in close lines along the thoroughfare from Waterloo Place to the Langham Hotel.

It was a bright, sunny forenoon, and as Vivian Hammersley, now a convalescent, and in accurate morning mufti, looked on the well-dressed throng, the shops filled with everything the mind could desire or the world produce, and at the entire aspect of the well-swept street, he thought, after his recent experience of forest and donga, of rocky mountain and pathless karroo, that there was nothing like it in Europe for an idler—that it surpassed alike the Broadway of Uncle Sam and the Grand Boulevard of Paris.

Enjoying the situation and his surroundings to the fullest extent, he was walking slowly down towards where the colonnades stood of old, when suddenly he experienced something between an electric shock and a cold douche.

Both well mounted, a handsome fellow attired in excellent taste, with a tea-rose and a green sprig in his lapel, and a graceful girl in a well-fitting dark blue habit, a dainty hat and short veil, ambled slowly past him—so slowly that he could observe them well—and in the latter he recognised Finella!

Finella Melfort, mounted on her favourite pad Fern; but *who* was this with whom she seemed on such easy and laughing terms, and with whom she was riding through the streets of London, without even the escort of a groom?

Erelong quickening their pace to a trot, they turned westward along Conduit Street, as if intending to 'do a bit of Park,' and he lost sight of them.

Her companion was one whom Hammersley had never seen before, but he could remark that he had all the manner and appearance of a man of good birth; but there was even something more than that in his bearing—an undefinable and indescribable air of interest seemed to hover about them, and Hammersley thought he might prove a very formidable rival. But surely matters had not come to *that*?

To letters that he had addressed to Finella at Craigengowan, under cover to 'Miss Carlyon,' no answer had ever been

returned. He knew not that Dulcie was no longer there, and that the letters referred to had gone back to the Post Office. And so Finella's silence—was it indifference?—seemed unpleasantly accounted for now.

He knew not her address in London. The house of the Fettercairn family was shut up, and he could not accost her while escorted by 'that fellow,' as she seemed ever to be, for on two occasions he saw them again in the Row; nor could he prosecute any inquiries, as most of the mutual friends at whose dances and garden parties he had been wont to meet her in the past times were now out of town.

It was tantalising—exasperating!

Did she suppose he had been killed, and had already forgotten him? Did her heart shrink from a vacuum, or what? Thus pride soon supplemented jealousy.

A few days after the third occasion on which he had seen them, he was idling in the reading-room of 'The Rag'—as the Army and Navy Club is colloquially known, from a joke in *Punch*, and the smoking-room of which has the reputation of being the best in London; and few, perhaps none, of those who lounge therein are aware that the stately edifice occupies what was the site till 1790 of Nell Gwynne's house in Pall Mall.

'How goes it, Hammersley?' said Villiers, the aide-de-camp, who was also home on leave, and *en route* to join his regiment, being yet—as he grumblingly said—out of 'the Wolseley ring.' Has no Belgravian belle succeeded in capturing you yet—a hero, like myself, fresh from the assegaïs of Ulundi and all that sort of thing?

'No—I am still at large; but you forget that by the time I reached town the season was over.'

'Talking of belles,' said an officer who was lounging in a window, 'here comes one worth looking at.'

Finella and her cavalier, mounted again, were quietly rambling into the square from Pall Mall.

'Ah—she is with Garallan of the Bengal Cavalry,' said Villiers; 'he has come in for a good thing—has picked up an heiress, I hear.'



'About the most useful thing a fellow can pick up nowadays,' replied a tall officer named Gore.

'That girl is said to be always ahead of the London season.'

'How?'

'Dresses direct from Paris.'

'Garallan?' said Hammersley, turning from the window, as the pair had disappeared.

'A Major of the old Second Irregular Cavalry, and gained the V.C. when serving on the Staff at the storming of Jummoo.'

'Jummoo—where the devil is that?' asked one.

'On the Peshawur frontier,' replied another; 'he is now in luck's way, certainly.'

'They say,' resumed Villiers, in his laughing, off-hand way, and who really knew nothing of Finella, but was merely ventilating some club gossip, to the intense annoyance of Hammersley; 'they say she is a coquette from her finger-tips to her tiny balmorals, and would flirt with his Grace of Canterbury if she got a chance; and yet, with all that, she can be most sentimental. There is Gore of ours—a passed practitioner in the art of philandering——'

'Villiers, please to shut up,' said Hammersley impatiently, in a *sotto voce*; 'I know the young lady, and you don't.'

'The deuce you do?'

'Intimately.'

Villiers coloured, and lapsed into silence.

'I always look upon flirtation as playing with fire,' said Gore; 'never attempt it, but I get into some deuced scrape.'

'How much money is muddled up with matrimony in the world nowadays!' said Villiers, thinking probably of the heiress's thousands; 'I suppose it was different in the days of our grandfathers.'

'Not much, I fancy,' said Gore.

Hammersley had now occasion for much and somewhat bitter thought. Finella and this officer were evidently the subjects of club gossip and not very well-bred banter; the conviction galled him.

'Where the deuce or with whom does she reside?' he thought; 'but to find anyone you want, I don't know a more difficult place than this big village on Thames.'

The wrong person—like himself apparently—turned up at the wrong time in no new experience to anyone; but this intimacy of Finella and her cavalier seemed to be a daily matter, as Hammersley had seen them so often; and how often were they too probably together on occasions that he could know nothing of?

The germ of jealousy was now planted in his heart, and 'such germs by force of circumstances sometimes flourish and bear bitter fruit; at others, nothing assisting, they perish in the mind that gave them birth'; but a new force was given to the remarks of Villiers by some that Hammersley overheard the same evening in the same place—the 'Rag.'

Then he suddenly recognised Finella's cavalier in full evening costume, eating his dinner alone in a corner of the great dining-room, and all unaware that he was sternly and closely scrutinized by one man, and the subject of conversation for other two, whose somewhat flippant remarks from behind a newspaper reached the ears of the former.

'Who is he, do you say? His face is new to me.'

'Ronald Garallan, of the Bengal Cavalry—a lucky dog.'

'How so?'

'Is going in for a good thing, I hear.'

'For what?'

'His cousin with no end of tin.'

'His cousin?' questioned the other, and Hammersley's heart at the same time.

'Yes—the handsome Miss Melfort with the funny name—Finella Melfort.'

'So they are engaged?'

'I believe so; but I don't think from all I hear that the Major has much of a vocation for domesticity.'

'Even with Finella?'

'Even with Finella,' replied the other, laughing.

Hammersley felt a dark frown gather on his brow to hear

her Christian name—*his* property, as he deemed it—used in this off-hand fashion, and he felt a violent inclination to punch his brother-officer's head. However, he only moved his chair away from the vicinity of the speakers, but not before he heard one of them say to Garallan :

'Been to many dances since your return? England, you know, expects every marriageable bachelor to do his duty.'

'The season is over,' replied the Major curtly; and then added, 'You forget that I am on leave—the sick-list, with a Medical Board before me yet.'

'What a bore! But you are bound for some festive scene to-night, I presume?'

'Only to the Lyceum.'

'*The Lyceum*—with her perhaps,' thought Hammersley; and to see the affair out to the bitter end, he resolved to go there too.

He was cut to the heart again, and bit his nether lip to preserve his self-control. He had never heard of this cousin, Ronald Garallan; he certainly found his name in the Army List, but did not believe he was any cousin at all; and this only served to make matters look more and more black.

Hammersley, in his natural pride of spirit, rather revolted at going to the theatre, feeling as if he was acting somewhat like a spy, but he had a right to learn for himself what was on the *tapis* with regard to Finella; and the Lyceum was as free a theatre to him as to anyone else; so a few minutes after saw him bowling along the Strand in a hansom cab.

He got a seat on the grand tier, but with difficulty, and, fortunately for his purpose, a little back and well out of sight; and, oblivious of the stage and all the usual scenic splendours there, he swept 'the house' again and again, with the same powerful field-glass he had so lately used on many a scouting expedition, but in vain, till the crimson satin curtain of a private box was suddenly drawn back, and Finella in a perfect costume, yet not quite full dress, sat there like a little queen, with many a sparkling jewel, and Garallan half leaning on the back of her chair, as she consulted the programme, after



depositing a beautiful bouquet and her opera-glass on the front of the box before her.

Hammersley's heart seemed to give a leap, and then stood still, while he actually felt an ache in the bullet wound which had so nearly cost him his life.

There they were, in a private box together, and without a *chaperon*, which certainly looked like cousinship, though every way distasteful to Hammersley; and Garallan leant over her chair, ignoring the performance entirely, and evidently entertaining her in 'that original and delicious strain in which Adam and Eve were probably the first proficient.'

And Finella was smiling upwards at times with her radiant eyes and *riant* face, with the bright and happy expression of one who had nothing left to wish for in the world; while he—Vivian Hammersley—might be, for all she knew or seemed to care, lying unburied by the banks of the Umvolosi or the Lower Tugela!

He recalled the words of her letter, so long and so loving, which he received so unexpectedly in Zululand, in which she urged him to be brave of heart for her sake, and not to be discouraged by any opposition on the part of Lady Fettercairn, as she was rich enough to please herself, adding:

'Let us have perfect confidence in each other! Oh, you passionate silly! to run away in a rage as you did without seeking an explanation. How much it has cost me Heaven alone knows!'

'Now,' thought he, 'suppose all the explanation she gave Miss Carlyon at Craigengowan of that remarkable scene in the shrubbery, or that she was lured into a scrape with that cub Shafto, were mere humbug after all. It looks deuced like it, from what I see going on here in London. And then the rings I gave her—one a marriage hoop to keep—an unlucky gift—ha! ha! what a precious ass I have been!'

Vivian Hammersley, though a tough-looking and well-set-up linesman, was of an imaginative cast and of a highly sensitive nature, and such are usually well skilled in the art of elaborate self-torture.

He now perceived that for a moment she had drawn the glove from off her left hand—what a lovely little white hand it was! He turned his powerful field-glass thereon, with more interest and curiosity than he had done while watching for Zulu warriors, and there—yes—there, by Jove!—his heart gave a bound—was his engagement ring upon her engaged finger still—there was no doubt about that!

So what did all this too apparent philandering with another mean, if not the most arrant coquetry? Had her character changed within a few short months? It almost seemed so.

But Hammersley thought that, 'tide what may,' he had seen enough of the Lyceum for that night, and hurried away to the smoking-room of the 'Rag.'

---

## CHAPTER LIII.

### A REVELATION.

WE have written somewhat ahead of our general narrative, and must now recur to Lord Fettercairn's visit to Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw in Edinburgh, at that gentleman's request—one which filled the old peer with some surprise.

'Why the deuce did not his agent visit him?' he thought.

Smarting under Shafto's insolence, and acting on information given to him readily by Madelon Galbraith, Mr. Kippilaw took certain measures to obtain some light on a matter which he should have taken before.

'You look somewhat unhinged, Kippilaw,' said Lord Fettercairn, as he seated himself in the former's private business room.

'I feel so, my lord,' replied the lawyer, in a fidgety way, as he breathed upon and wiped his spectacles; 'I have to talk over an unpleasant matter with you.'

'Business?'

‘Yes ; perhaps you would defer it till after dinner?’

‘Not at all—what the deuce is it? Debts of Shafto’s?’

‘Worse, my lord!’

‘Worse! You actually seem unwell ; have a glass of sherry, if I may press you in your own house.’

‘No, thanks ; I am in positive distress.’

‘How—about what?’ asked the peer impatiently.

‘The fact is, my lord, I don’t know how to go about it and explain ; but for the first time since I began my career as a W.S.—some forty years ago now—I have made a great professional blunder, I fear.’

‘Sorry to hear it—but what have I to do with all that?’

‘Much.’

Lord Fettercairn changed colour.

‘You wrote strangely of Shafto?’

‘No wonder!’ groaned Mr. Kippilaw.

‘How?’

‘The matter very nearly affects your lordship’s dearest interests—the honour of your house and title.’

‘The devil!’ exclaimed the peer, starting up, and touched upon his most tender point.

‘I have had more than one long conversation with the old nurse, Madelon Galbraith, and therefore instituted certain inquiries, which I should have done before, and have come to the undoubted and legal conclusion that—that——’

‘What?’ asked Fettercairn, striking the floor with his right heel.

‘That the person who passes as your grandson is not your grandson at all!’

‘What—how—who the devil is he then?’

‘The son of a Miss MacIan who married a Mr. Shafto Gyle.’

‘D——n the name! Then who and where is my grandson and heir?’

‘One who was lately or is now serving as a soldier in Zululand.’

‘My God! and you tell me all this now—*now*?’

‘When Lennard Melfort lay dying at Revelstoke, he entrusted



the proofs of his only son's birth with his older nephew, Shafto, who, with amazing cunning, used them to usurp his rights and position. I blame myself much. I should have made closer inquiries at the time ; but the documents seemed all and every way to the point, and I could not doubt the handwriting or the signatures of your poor dead son. The result, however, has rather stunned me.'

'And, d——n it, Kippilaw, it rather stuns me !' exclaimed Lord Fettercairn, in high wrath. 'May it not be a mistake, this last idea ?'

'No—everything is too well authenticated.'

'But, Kippilaw,' said Lord Fettercairn, after a pause, caused by dire perplexity, 'we had the certificate of birth.'

'Yes—but not in Shafto's name. The document was mutilated and without the baptismal certificate, of which I have got *this* copy from the Rev. Mr. Paul Pentreath. The name in both is, as you see,' added Mr. Kippilaw, laying the document on the table, 'Florian, only son of the Hon. Lennard Melfort (otherwise MacIan) and Flora his wife—Florian, called so after her.'

'You have seen this young man ?'

'Yes—once in this room, and I was struck with his likeness to Lennard. He is dark, Shafto fair. The true heir has a peculiar mark on his right arm, says Madelon Galbraith, his nurse. Here is a letter from a doctor of the regiment stating that Florian has such a mark, which Shafto has not ; and mother-marks, as they are called, never change, like the two marks of the famous "Claimant."'

'I cannot realise it all—that we have been so befooled !' exclaimed Lord Fettercairn, walking up and down the room.

'But you must ; it will come home to you soon enough.'

'Egad, so far as bills and debts go, it has come home to me sharply enough already. It is a terrible story—a startling one.'

'Few families have stories like it.'

'And one does not wish such in one's own experience, Kippilaw. It is difficult of belief—monstrous, Kippilaw !'

'Monstrous indeed, my Lord Fettercairn !' chimed in Mr.

Kippilaw, who then proceeded to unfold a terrible tale of the results of Shafto's periodical visits to Edinburgh and London—his bills and post-obits with the money-lenders, who would all be 'diddled' now, as he proved not to be the heir at all; and though last, not least, his late disgraceful affair of the loaded dice, and the fracas with Major Garallan.

'Garallan! that old woman Drumshoddy's nephew—whew!' His lordship perspired with pure vexation. 'I have to thank you, however, for finding out the true heir at last.'

'When there are a fortune and a title in the case, people are easily found, my lord.'

'Things come right generally, as they always do, if one waits and trusts in God,' said Madelon Galbraith, when she was admitted to an audience, in which, with the garrulity of years, she supplemented all that Mr. Kippilaw had advanced; and, as she laughed with exultation, she showed—despite her age—two rows of magnificent teeth—teeth that were bright as her eyes were dark.

'Laoghe mo chri! Laoghe mo chri!' she murmured to herself; 'your only son will be righted yet.'

Every nation has its own peculiar terms of endearment, so Madelon naturally referred to Flora in her own native Gaelic.

'And Florian is—as you say, Kippilaw—serving in Zululand?' said Lord Fettercairn.

'Yes.'

'Serving as a private soldier?'

'He was——'

'*Was*—is he dead?' interrupted the peer, sharply.

'No; he is now an officer, and a distinguished one—an officer of the gallant but most unfortunate 24th. I have learned that much.'

'Write to him at once, and meanwhile telegraph to the Adjutant-General—no matter what the expense—for immediate intelligence about him. You will also write to Shafto—you know what to say to *him*.'

With right goodwill Mr. Kippilaw hastened to obey the peer's injunctions in both instances.

He wrote to Shafto curtly, relating all that had transpired, adding that he (Shafto) could not retain his present position for another day without risking a public trial, and that if he would confess the vile and cruel imposture of which he had been guilty he might escape being sent to prison, and obtaining perhaps 'permanent employment' in the Perth Penitentiary.

This letter—though not unexpected—proved a most bitter pill to Shafto ! He saw that 'the game was up'—his last card played, that life had no more in it for him, and that there was nothing left for him but to fly the country and his debts together.

His face was set hard, and into his shifty grey eyes came the savage gleam one may see in those of a cat before it springs, but with this expression were mingled rage and fear.

With Mr. Kippilaw's letter were two others, from different parties. In one he was informed that legal proceedings had been taken against him, and in default of his putting in an appearance, judgment for execution and costs had been given against him in an English court, for £847 16s. 8d., in favour of a Jew, who held another bill, which, though it originally represented £400, would cost £800 before he parted with it ; and Shafto actually laughed a little bitter and discordant laugh as he rent the lawyers' letters into fragments and cast them to the wind.

Before departing, however, and before his story transpired, he contrived to borrow from the butler and housekeeper every spare pound they possessed, and quietly went forth, portmanteau in hand.

Did he, as he thus left the house, recall the auspicious day on which he had first seen, with keen and avaricious exultation, Craigengowan in all its baronial beauty, its wealth of pasture and meadow-land, of wood, and moor, and mountain, and deemed that all—all were, or would be, his ?

He turned his back on the Howe of the Mearns for ever, and from that hour all trace of him was lost !

\* \* \* \* \*

The reply to Mr. Kippilaw's telegram to South Africa gave him, and even his noble client, cause for some anxiety.



It was dated from Head-quarters, Ulundi, on the last day of August, and stated that Lieutenant MacIan 'was down with fever, and not expected to live.'

So—if he died—the title of Fettercairn, being a Scottish one, would go to Finella, and the heir male of whosoever she married.

---

## CHAPTER LIV.

### IN THE NGOME FOREST.

WE now approach the last scenes of Florian's foreign service.

By the 13th of August the cordon of European troops and Native lines drawn round the district in which the fugitive King of the Zulus lurked had been drawn closer, and it was now distinctly known at head-quarters in Ulundi that he had sought refuge in the Forest of Ngome, a wild, most savage and untrodden district between two rivers (with long and grotesque names), tributaries of the Black Umvolosi, and overshadowed by a mountain chain called the Ngome.

Various parties detailed for the pursuit, search, and capture failed, till, on the 26th of August, the Chief of the Staff received information indicating where Cetewayo was certain to be found, and Major Marter, of the King's Dragoon Guards, was ordered to proceed next day in that direction with a squadron of his own regiment, a company of the Native Contingent, Lonsdale's Horse, and a few Mounted Infantry, led by Florian and another officer. The former was already suffering from fever caught by exposure to the night dews when scouting, and felt so weak and giddy that at times he could barely keep in his saddle ; but, full of youthful ardour and zeal, fired by the promotion and praises he had won, he was anxious only, if life were spared him, to see the closing act of the great campaign in South Africa.

The early morning of the 27th saw the Horse depart, the

King's Dragoon Guards leading the way, after the Mounted Infantry scouts; and picturesque they looked in their bright scarlet tunics and white helmets, with accoutrements glittering as they rode in Indian file through the scenery of the tropical forest, and then for a time debouched upon open ground.

Nodding in his saddle, Florian felt spiritless and sick at heart, wishing intensely that the last act was over.

Far in the distance around extended a range of mountains that were purple and blue in their hues, even against the greenish-blue of the sky, and vast tracts of wood, tinted with every hue of green, red, and golden; in the foreground were brawling streams dashing through channels of rock to join the Black Umvolosi, under graceful date palms, mimosa trees, and the undergrowth of baboon ropes and other giant trailers. Scared troops of the elands, grey and brown herds of fleet antelopes glided past, and more than once the roar of a lion made the wilderness re-echo.

And this ground had to be traversed under a fierce and burning sun till the valley of the Ivuno River was reached, prior to which three Dragoon Guard horses were carried off and devoured by lions.

So passed the day. The party reached a lonely little kraal on the summit of the Nenyé Mountain, and bivouacked there for the night.

Stretched on the floor of a hut, after drinking thirstily of some weak brandy and water, Florian watched the blood-red disc of the sun, mightier than it is ever seen in Europe, amid the luminous haze, begin to disappear behind the verge of the vast forest—the sea of timber—that spread below, casting forward in dark outline the quaint and grotesque euphorbia trees that at times take the shape of Indian idols.

Then a mist stole over the waste below, and a single star shone out with wondrous brilliance.

Florian was so weak in the morning that he would fain have abandoned the duty on which he had come, and remained in the hut at the kraal; but to linger behind was only to court death by the teeth of wild animals or the hands of scouting

Zulus, so wearily he clambered, rather than sprang as of old, into his saddle.

'Pull yourself together, if you can, my dear fellow,' said an officer; 'our task will soon be over. It is something after a close run to be in at the death; and it is waking men with their swords, not dreamers with their pens, who make history.'

'I am no dreamer,' said Florian, scarcely seeing the point of the other's remark.

'I did not mean that you were,' said the other, proffering his cigar-case; 'have a weed?'

But Florian shook his head with an emotion of nausea.

'Forward in single file from the right,' was the order given, for the sun would soon be up now. Already the bees were humming loudly among the tall reeds and giant flowers beside the stream that flowed downward from the kraal, the forest stems looked black or bronze-like in the grey and then crimson dawn, while the stars faded out fast.

In advancing to another kraal on the mountain, Major Marter's force had to traverse the forest bush, where trees of giant height and girth, matted and interwoven by baboon ropes and other trailers, shut out even the fierce sun of Africa, and made a cool green roof or leafy shade, where the grass grew tall as a Grenadier, where hideous apes barked and chattered, bright-hued parrots croaked or screamed, and where nature seemed to have run wild in unbridled luxuriance since the Ark rested on Ararat, and the waters of the flood subsided.

The mountains of the Ngome, and overlooking the forest of that name, are flat-topped, like all others in South Africa; but Major Marter found the western slope to be dangerously precipitous, and thence he and his guides looked down into a densely wooded valley, lying more than two thousand feet below.

About two miles distant, thin smoke could be seen ascending amid the greenery, from a small kraal by the side of a brawling stream, and therein Cetewayo was known to be.

As cavalry could not reach the bottom without making a very long detour, the Major ordered all the mounted men to lay aside



their bright steel scabbards, and all other accoutrements likely to make a rattling noise, and these, with the pack horses, were left in charge of a small party, the command of which was offered to the sinking Florian, who foolishly declined, and rode with the rest to a less precipitous slope of the hills three miles distant, down which the Dragoon Guards led their chargers by the bridle, crossed the stream referred to, a small fence, and a marsh, and, remounting, made a dash for the kraal, sword in hand, from the north, while the Native Contingent formed up south of it on some open ground.

The capture of Cetewayo is an event too recent to be detailed at length here.

It is known how his few followers, on seeing the red-coated cavalry riding up, shouted, in unison with the Native Contingent :

‘The white men are here—you are taken !’

Then the fallen royal savage came forth, looking weary, weak, and footsore ; and when a soldier—Tom Tyrrell—attempted to seize him, he drew himself up with an air of simple dignity, and repelled him.

‘Touch me not, white soldier !’ he exclaimed ; ‘I am a king, and surrender only to your chief.’

With their prisoner strictly guarded, the party passed the night of the 29th August in the forest of Ngome, and Florian, as he flung himself on the dewy grass, with fevered limbs and aching head, felt an emotion of thankfulness that all was over, and it was nearly so with himself now !

The moon had not yet risen ; the darkness was dense around the hut where lay Cetewayo, guarded by many a sabre and bayonet ; and the jackals and hyenas were making night hideous with their howling, mingled at times with the yells of wild dogs.

Ever and anon the barking of baboons, as they swung themselves from branch to branch, seemed to indicate the approach of some great beast of prey, and the crackle of dry twigs suggested the slimy crawling of a poisonous snake.

So passed the night in the forest of Ngome. With dawn

the trumpet sounded 'To horse,' and again the whole party moved on the homeward way to Ulundi. The night in the dreary forest, lying out in the open, had done its worst for Florian. On reaching the camp he fell from his saddle into the arms of the watchful Tom Tyrrell, and was carried to his tent, prostrate and delirious.

Hence the tenor of the telegram received from the medical staff by Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw.

How Florian lived to reach Durban, conveyed there with other sick in the ambulance waggons, he never knew, so heavily was the hand of fever laid on him; but many a time he had seen, as in a dream, the horses struggling through bridgeless torrents, and graves dug amid the pathless wastes for those who died on the route, and were laid therein, rolled in their blanket, and covered up before their limbs were cold, till at last the village of Durban—for it is little else, though the principal seaport of Natal—was reached, and he was placed in an extemporised hospital.

In his weakness, after the delirium passed away, he felt always as one in a dream. The windows were open to the breeze from the Indian Ocean, and the roar of the surf could be heard without ceasing on the sandy beach, while at night the sharp crescent moon shone like a silver sabre in the clear blue sky, and, laden with the perfume of many tropical plants, the sweet air without struggled with the close atmosphere of the crowded hospital-wards, in which our 'boy soldiers died like sick flies,' as a general officer reported.

And there he lay, hour after hour, wasted by the fever born of miasma and the jungle, rigid and corpse-like in outline, under the light white coverlet. For how long or how short this was to last no one ventured to surmise.

He had ceased now to toss to and fro on his pillow and pour forth incoherent babble, in which Revelstoke, Dulcie Carlyon, his boyish days, and the recent stirring events of the now ended campaign were all strangely woven together, while Tom Tyrrell, now his constant attendant, who nursed him tenderly as a woman would have done, had listened with alarm and dismay.

And more than once Florian had dreamed that Tom, bearded to the eyes, bronzed to negro darkness, and clad in an old patched regimental tunic, was not Tom at all, but Dulcie, the girl he loved so passionately, watching there, smoothing his pillow and holding the cup with its cooling draught to his parched lips.

'They say that fever must run its course, sir, whatever that means,' said Tom to the doctor.

'Ah ! a fever like this is a very touch-and-go affair,' responded old Gallipot, in whom the telegrams from head-quarters and from Edinburgh had given a peculiar interest for his patient.

'Am I dying, doctor—don't fear to tell me?' asked the latter suddenly in a low, husky voice.

'Why do you ask, my poor fellow?' replied the doctor, bending over him.

'I mean simply, is the end of this illness—death?'

'To tell you the truth, I greatly fear it is,' replied the doctor, shaking his head.

'God's will be done !' said Florian resignedly. 'Well, well, perhaps it is better so—I am so far gone—but Dulcie !' he added to himself in a husky whisper—'poor Dulcie, alone—all alone !'

His senses had quite returned now, but he was so weak that he could neither move hand nor foot, and his eyelids, unable to uphold their own weight, closed as soon as raised, and often while his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth as he lay thus he was supposed to be asleep.

'Poor fellow !' he heard Tom Tyrrell whisper to an hospital orderly in a broken voice ; 'he's got his marching orders, and will soon be off—yet he doesn't seem to suffer much.'

How hard it was to die so young, with what should have been a long life before him, and now one with honours won to make it valuable.

Well, well, he thought, if it was God's will it would be no worse for him than for others. It seemed as natural to die as to be born—our place in the world is vacant before and after ; but yet, again, it *was* hard, he thought, to die, and die so young



in a distant and barbarous land, where the savage, the wild animal, and the Kaffir vulture would be the only loiterers near his lonely and unmarked grave.

There came a day when the scene changed to him again. He was in the cabin of a ship, lying near an open port-hole, through which he could see the ocean rippling like molten gold in the setting sun, the red light of which bathed in ruddy tints the shore of Durban and the white lighthouse on the bluff that guards its entrance.

Anon he heard the tramp overhead of the seamen as they manned the capstan bars and tripped merrily round to the sound of drum and fife, heaving short on the anchor, and heaving with a will, till it was apeak. Then the canvas was let fall and sheeted home; the revolution of the screw-propeller was felt to make the great 'trooper' vibrate in all her length, and the glittering waves began to roll astern as she sped on her homeward way.

Would he live to see the end of the voyage? It seemed very problematical.

---

## CHAPTER LV.

### THE MAJOR PROPOSES.

MEANWHILE Hammersley's suspicion and jealousy grew apace, and it has been said that when the latter emotion begins to reason, we legally 'always hold a brief for the prosecution in such cases, and admit no evidence save that which tends to a conviction.'

In his rage he thought of quitting London and going—but where? He knew not then precisely.

'Oh, to be well and strong again!' he would mutter; 'out of this place and back to the regiment and the old life. There is a shindy brewing fast in the Transvaal, and that will be the place for me.'

At other times he would think—'I wish that recruit of Card-

well's had put his bullet through my brain. I would rather he had done so than feel it throb as it does now.'

Some loves may dwindle into indifference or turn to hatred, but seldom or ever to mere friendship. Yet it is not easy 'to hate those we have once loved because we happen to discover a weak point in their armour, any more than it is easy to love unlovable people because of their resplendent virtues.'

No response had ever come to the letters he had written Finella under cover to Dulcie; thus he ceased to send them, all unaware that these letters addressed to 'Miss Carlyon' had been returned to the Post Office, endorsed, by order of Lady Fettercairn, 'Not known at Craigengowan'; and now the heavy thoughts of Hammersley affected his manner and gait, and thus he often walked slowly, as if he were weary; and so he was weary and sick of heart, for the sense of hope being dead within the breast will give a droop to the head and a lagging air to the step.

Lady Drumshoddy rented a grand old-fashioned house in that very gloomy quadrangle called St. James's Square, the chief mansion in which is that of his Grace of Norfolk, and round the still somewhat scurvy enclosure of which Dr. Johnson and Savage, when friendless and penniless, spent many a summer night with empty stomachs and hearts heated with antagonism to the then Government. About a hundred years before that, Macaulay tells us that St. James's Square 'was a receptacle for all the offal and cinders, and all the dead cats and dogs, of Westminster. At one time a cudgel-player kept his ring there. At another an impudent squatter settled himself there, and built a shed for rubbish under the windows of the gilded *salons* in which the first magnates of the realm—Norfolk, Ormond, Kent, and Pembroke—gave banquets and balls. It was not till these nuisances had lasted through a whole generation, and till much had been written about them, that the inhabitants applied to Parliament for permission to put up rails and plant trees.'

Here, then, in this now fashionable locality, had my Lady Drumshoddy pitched her tent, and hence it was that Vivian

Hammersley, being almost daily at 'The Rag,' close by, saw Finella and her cousin so frequently; yet it never occurred to him to think of the old Scoto-Indian Judge's widow, of whom he knew little or nothing.

The circumstance that Finella was undoubtedly still wearing his engagement-ring made Hammersley, amid all his misery and anger, long for some more certain information than mere club gossip and banter afforded, and for that which was due from her—an explicit explanation. He thought, as a casuist has it, 'that to know her false would not be so bitter as to doubt. To mistrust the woman we love is torture. To have a knowledge of her guilt is the first step towards burying our love. Our pride is then thoroughly aroused, and that contempt for treachery, inherent in our nature, flames out.'

On her part, Finella had some cause for pique—grave cause, she thought. She had twice, at intervals, seen Vivian Hammersley riding in the Row, when it was impossible for her to address him or afford him the least sign; and now, knowing that he was home, and in London, she naturally thought, why did he not make some effort to communicate with her, in spite of any barrier Lady Fettercairn might raise between them, if he supposed she still resided at Craigengowan? Thus she too was beginning to look regretfully back to his love as a dream that had fled.

'A pretty kettle of fish they have made of it at Craigengowan, my dear!' snorted Lady Drumshoddy, when she heard of the late events that had transpired there. 'They have been imposed upon fearfully—quite another "Claimant" affair; but I always had my suspicions, my dear—I always had my suspicions, I am glad to say,' she coolly added, oblivious of the fact that she always aided and abetted Shafto in all his plans and hopes to secure Finella and her fortune.

It was convenient to ignore or forget all that now.

'My Ronald is all right,' snorted the hard-featured old dame to herself; 'he is the right man in the right place; but, as for Finella, she is like most girls, I suppose—will not fall in love where and when it is most clearly her duty to do so—provoking minx!'



It was a prominent feature in the character of my Lady Drumshoddy, contradiction, though she would not for a second tolerate it in anyone else; and as Major Garallan was temporarily a resident at her house in St. James's Square, she, like Lady Fettercairn on the other occasion, put great faith in cousinship and propinquity.

What a different kind and style of cousin Ronald Garallan was from Shafto, Finella naturally thought; not that as yet she loved him a bit, as he evidently loved her, but he was such a delightful companion to escort her everywhere.

She had received plenty of admiration and adulation during her short season in London before, and to suppose that she was blind to the young Major's attentions would be to deem her foolish; no woman or girl is ever blind to that sort of thing. She, like the rest of her charming sex, knew by instinct when she had won a success; but she also knew that she had one powerful attraction—money—and knew, too, that her heart was engaged otherwise; and this knowledge made her tolerably indifferent to the admiration of her cousin, while the indifference laid her open to the appearance of receiving his close attentions. Meanwhile the latter was enjoying his Capua.

'How delicious all this is!' he often thought, as he lounged by Finella's side in the drawing-room, or rode with her in the Row, 'after sweltering so long in that hottest and most hateful of up-country stations, Jehanabad, on the shining rocks of which the Indian sun pours all its rays for months, till the granite at night gives out the caloric it has absorbed by day, and so the roasting process never ceases, and sleep even on a charpoy becomes impossible, all the more so that hyenas, jackals, and wild cats make night hideous with their yells. This is indeed an exchange,' he once added aloud, 'and all the more delicious that I have it with *you*, Cousin Finella.'

And Lady Drumshoddy, if she was near, would watch the pair complacently through her great spectacles, while pretending to be intent on her only paper (after the *Morning Post*), the *Queen*, which she read as regularly—more so, we fear—than she read her night prayers.

And while Garallan's attentions were gradually warming and leading up to a declaration, Finella was thinking angrily of Hammersley.

'Perhaps he has forgotten his love for me—nay, he would never forget *that!* but absence, time, change of scene, or a regard for some one else may have come between us. It is the way with men, I have been told.'

So, in fulness of time, there came one fine forenoon, when Lady Drumshoddy had judiciously left the cousins quite alone, and when Finella, in one of her most bewitching costumes, was idling over a book of prints, with Ronald Garallan by her side, admiring the contour of her head, the curve of her neck, her pure profile, the lovely little ear that was next him, and everything else, to the little bouquet in her bosom that rose and fell with every respiration, let his passion completely overmaster him, and taking caressingly within his own her left hand, which she did not withdraw, he said :

'I have something to ask you, Finella—you know what it is?'

'Indeed, I do not.'

'Then, of course, I must tell you?'

'I think you must,' said she, looking him calmly in the face for a second.

'For weeks you must have known it.'

'Known—what?'

'That I love you!' he said in a low voice, and bending until his moustache touched her cheek; 'and now I ask you to give me yourself.'

The hand was withdrawn now; she coloured, but not deeply, and her eyelashes drooped.

'Give me yourself, darling,' he resumed, 'and trust to me for taking care of you all the days of your life.'

Though she must have expected some such ending as this to their late hourly intimacy, she was nevertheless astonished, and said, with a little nervous laugh at the abruptness and matter-of-fact form of the proposal :

'Cousin Ronald, I can surely take care of myself. But—but do you want to marry me?'

‘Of course!’ replied Cousin Ronald, with very open eyes, while tugging the ends of his moustache.

‘Well— it can’t be.’

‘Can’t be?’

‘No. I thank you very much, and like you very much— there are both my hands on that ; but marriage is impossible. Yet don’t let us quarrel, for that would be absurd, but be the best of good friends as ever.’

‘And this is my answer?’ said he, with a very crushed air.

‘Yes,’ she replied, colouring deeply now ; ‘once and for all.’

‘I won’t take it,’ said he, with mingled sorrow and anger. ‘I will not, darling !—I shall come to it again, when, perhaps, you may think better of it and of me. Till then good-bye, and God bless you, dearest Finella !’

Kissing both her hands, he abruptly withdrew, and soon after leaving the house took his departure for Brighton ; and now the luckless Finella had to explain the reason thereof, and to undergo the ever-recurring admonitions, reprehensions, parables, and absolute scoldings of ‘grandmamma Drumshoddy’, who was neither quite so well bred nor so calm in spirit and outward bearing as Lady Fettercairn, then ‘eating humble pie’ at Craigengowan.

If Florian, the new heir, was indeed dying, as reported, when he was embarked with other sick and wounded officers and men at Durban, a prospective peerage, with all the estates, enhanced the value and position of Finella in the eyes of Lady Drumshoddy, so far as a marriage with her nephew, the Major, was concerned, and most wrathful she was indeed to find that her schemes were going ‘agee.’

Lord Fettercairn fully shared her ideas, and knew that whoever married the only daughter of the House of Melfort, though he might assume the old name, it and the title too went virtually out of the family.

Finella had remarked to herself that for some time past Lady Fettercairn in her letters never mentioned the name of Shafto, or hinted at the old wish about marrying *him*.

Why was this?



She knew not the reason that his existence was ignored, till Lady Drumshoddy bluntly referred to 'the pretty kettle of fish' made lately by the folks at Craigengowan, and then, in the gentleness of her heart, Finella almost felt pitiful for the now homeless and worthless one.

---

## CHAPTER LVI.

## A CLOUD DISPELLED.

SEPTEMBER was creeping on, and in London then the weather is often steady and pleasant, though in the mornings and evenings the first chills of the coming winter begin to be felt. The summer-parched and dust-laden foliage of the trees droops in park and square, and the great gorse-bushes are all in golden bloom at Wimbledon, at Barnes Common, and other fern and heath-covered wastes.

The Row and other favourite promenades were now empty ; Parliament was not sitting ; and shooting and cub-hunting were in full force in the country.

Sooner or later one runs up against everyone in this whirligig world of ours ; thus Hammersley, still lingering aimlessly in London, coming one day from the Horse Guards, in crossing the east end of the Mall, found himself suddenly face to face with her of whom his thoughts were full—Finella Melfort !

Finella, in a smart sealskin jacket, with her muff slung by a silken cord round her slender neck, a most becoming hat, the veil of which was tied tightly and piquantly across her short upper lip.

' Finella !'

' Oh, Vivian !'

Their exclamations and joyful surprise were mutual, but 'the horns and hoofs of the green-eyed monster' were still obtruding amid the thoughts of Hammersley, though she frankly gave

him both her plump little tightly gloved hands, which after a caressing pressure he speedily dropped, rather to the surprise of the charming proprietor thereof.

‘Did you know I was in London?’ she asked.

‘Yes—too well.’

‘And yet made no effort to see—to write to me!’

‘I knew not where to find you.’

‘You might have inquired—that is, if you cared to know.’

‘Cared—oh, Finella!’

‘And your wound—your cruel wound! Have you recovered from it?’

‘Nearly so—thus I have just been at the Horse Guards about going on foreign service again.’

‘Foreign service—again?’

‘Yes; there are wounds deeper and more lasting than any an enemy can inflict.’

She evidently did not understand his mood.

“Are you not rash, Vivian, to be out in a day so chill as this?” she said.

‘A little chill, fog, or rain, more or less, are trifles to one whose thoughts are all of sad and bitter things.’

‘Vivian?—your wound, was it a severe one?’

‘Very. I received a shot that was meant for the assassination of another.’

‘Who?’

‘Florian: your friend Miss Carlyon’s lover, who, poor fellow, I hear sailed from Durban in a bad way.’

‘Why do you look and speak so coldly, Vivian—Vivian?’ she asked, with her slender fingers interlaced, while he certainly eyed her wistfully, curiously, and even angrily.

‘Why?’

‘Yes,’ said she, impetuously. ‘Why are you so cruel—so hard to me?’ she added, with a sob in her voice, as she placed a hand on his arm and looked earnestly up in his face. ‘Surely it is not for me to plead thus?’

‘Why are you so touched?’

‘Can you ask, while treating me thus?’

'Like a thorough Scotch girl, you answer one question by asking another.'

'Well, in constancy men certainly do not bear the palm,' said she, drawing back a pace, and inserting her hands in her muff.

'I think you should be the last to taunt me, at all events, as appearances go.'

There was a moment's silence, for both were too honest and true to have acquired what has been termed 'the useful and social art of talking platitudes' when their hearts were full.

'And this is our long-looked-forward-to meeting?' she said, reproachfully.

'Yes—alas!'

'Why do you regard me—not with the furious rage that possessed you on quitting Craigengowan—but with coldness, doubt, indifference?'

'Indifference! Oh, no, Finella.'

'Doubt—suspicion, then?'

'It may be,' he replied with a doggedness that certainly was not natural to him.

'What *have* I done?' asked the girl, sorely piqued now.

'Nothing, perhaps,' he replied, shrinking from putting his thoughts into words.

'Can it be that you are changeable and inconstant? When you saw me, and knew that I was in London, why did you not come to me at once?'

'Because I knew not where or with whom you were residing.'

'Did you go to Fettercairn House?'

'No.'

'Why?' she asked curtly, for *her* suspicions were being kindled now.

'I knew the family were not in town.'

'Then you might have asked for Lady Drumshoddy, and, if not, somehow have heard——'

'By tipping the butler or Mr. James Plush?'

'If I wanted to do anything I would grasp at the first chance of achieving it,' said Finella, her dark eyes sparkling now.



'Men are seldom creatures of impulse. I reasoned over the matter, and put two and two together.'

'Reason generally urges men to do what they wish. But what do you mean by putting two and two together?'

'Well, frankly, I referred to you and Major Garallan.'

'Do you make *four* of us? Vivian, you are absurd,' said Finella, after a little pause, during which she coloured and stamped a little foot impatiently on the ground.

'Perhaps,' said he sadly and wearily; 'but I heard so much at the clubs and elsewhere that I knew not what to think.'

'About us, you mean—Cousin Ronald and me?'

'Yes.'

'You heard—what?'

'That you were about to be married—that is the long and the short of it.'

His face crimsoned with annoyance as he spoke; but hers grew pale.

'And you, Vivian—you believed this?' she asked mournfully and reproachfully.

'Much that I saw seemed to confirm it. You and he were so much together.'

'How unfortunate I am to have been suspected by you twice! Ronald is only my cousin.'

'So was that precious Shafto!'

'Why hark back upon that episode?' she asked, piteously.

'Have I offended you? Misunderstanding between us seems to have become our normal state.'

'Your cousin may—nay, I doubt not, loves you, Finella; but why do you permit him to do so?'

'Can I help it? Ronald was a kind of brother to me—nothing more,' she continued, ignoring—perhaps at that moment forgetting—his recent proposal; 'but my heart has never for a moment wandered from you. 'See!' she added, while quickly and nervously stripping the kid glove from her right hand, 'your engagement-ring has never, for a second even, been off my finger since first you placed it there.'

'My darling—my darling!' he exclaimed, as all his heart

went forth towards her. 'Oh, Finella! what I suffered when I thought I had again lost you! Yet I would almost undergo it all again—for this!' he added, as he passionately kissed her, after a swift glance round to see that no one was nigh.

So the reconciliation was complete; all doubts were dissipated, and they lingered long together, talking of themselves and a thousand kindred topics, in which foreign service was *not* included; and more complete it was, when, after escorting her home (Lady Drumshoddy being absent at Exeter Hall), in the solitude of the drawing-room, they had a sweeter lingering still, Finella's head resting on his shoulder, the touch of her cheek thrilling through him, and like some tender and tuneful melody her soft cooing voice seemed to vibrate in his head and heart together.

So they were united again after all!

At last they had to separate, and looking forward to a visit on the morrow, Hammersley seeming to tread on air, in a state of radiance, both in face and mind, hurried across the square to the club, where he came suddenly upon Villiers, whom he had not seen for some days, and who seemed rather curiously to resent his evident state of high spirits.

'Well, Villiers,' said he, 'you do look glum, by Jove! What is the matter now—the Wolseley ring, and all that—the service going to the dogs!'

'You know deuced well that it *has* gone—went with the regimental system. No; it is a cursed affair of my own. I have been robbed.'

'Robbed—how—and of what?'

'My pocket-book, containing some valuable papers and more than £500 in Bank of England notes.'

'Good heavens! I hope you have the numbers?'

'No—never noted such a thing in my life. Who but a careful screw would do so?'

'How came it about?'

'Well, you see,' said Villiers slowly, while manipulating a cigar, 'I took a run over to Ostend, and there, as the devil would have it, at the Casino, and afterwards in the mail boat to

Dover, I fell in with a charming Belgienne, an awfully pretty and seductive creature, who was on her way to London and quite alone. We had rather a pronounced flirtation, and exchanged photos—an act of greater folly on her part than on mine, as the event proved; for, after taking mine from my pocket-book (which she could see was full of notes), I never saw the latter again. I dropped asleep, but awoke when the tickets were collected—awoke to find that she had slipped out at some intermediate station, and the pocket-book, which I had placed in my breast-pocket, was gone too! There had been no one else in the carriage with me—indeed, I had quietly tipped the guard to arrange it so. Thus, as no trace of it could be found, after the most careful search, she must have deftly abstracted it. Here is her photo—a deuced dear work of art to me!’

‘She is pretty, indeed!’ exclaimed Hammersley; ‘such a quantity of beautiful fair hair!’

‘It was dark golden.’

‘Surely it was rash of her to give you this?’

‘It was vanity, perhaps, when the idea of theft had not occurred to her.’

‘Throw it in the fire’

‘Not at all.’

‘What do you mean to do with it—préserve the likeness of a mere adventuress?’

‘I shall give it to the police as a clue. It may lead to the recovery of my money, and, what is of more consequence to me, my correspondence.’

So the photo of the pretty Belgienne was handed over to the authorities; but neither Villiers nor Hammersley could quite foresee what it was to lead to.

---



## CHAPTER LVII.

## FLORIAN DYING.

AFTER her flight from Craigengowan to London, Dulcie had found shelter in the same house wherein she had lodged after leaving Revelstoke, in a gloomy alley that opens northward off Oxford Street. The vicar, on whose protection and interest she relied, was not in London, and would be absent therefrom for fully a month ; so she had written to Mr. Pentreath, who quietly, but firmly rebuked her for her folly in quitting Craigengowan, and expressed his dismay that she should be alone and unprotected in London, and urged her to come to him, in Devonshire, at once.

But Dulcie remembered his slender income, his pinched household, and notwithstanding all the dear and sad associations of Revelstoke, she remained in London, thinking that amid its mighty world something would be sure to turn up.

The solitude of her little room was so great that times there were when she thought she might go mad from pure inanition and loneliness ; but greater still seemed the solitude of the streets, which, crowded as they were by myriads passing to and fro, were without one friend for her.

She was not without her occasional *châteaux en Espagne*—dreams of relations, rich but as yet unknown, who would seek her out and cast a sunshine on her life ; but how sordid seemed all her surroundings after the comfort and luxury, the splendour and stateliness, of Craigengowan.

Dulcie had once had her girlish dreams of life in London, at a time when the chances of her ever being there were remote indeed—dreams that were as the glittering scenes in a pantomime ; and now, in her loneliness, she was appalled by the great Babylon, so terrible in its vastness, so hideous in its monotony as a wilderness of bricks and bustle by day, bustle and gas by night, with its huge and dusky dome over all, with its tens upon thousands of vehicles of every kind—a whirling

vortex, cleft in two by a river of mud and slime, where the corpses of suicides and the murdered are ploughed up by steamers and dredges—a river that perhaps hides more crime and dreadful secrets than any other in Europe ; and amid the seething masses of the great Babylon she felt herself as a grain of sand on the seashore.

Our neighbours next door know us not, nor care to know ; and to the postman, the milkman, and the message-boy we are only ‘a number’ as long as we pay—nothing more.

So times there were when Dulcie longed intensely for the home of her childhood, with its shady Devonshire lanes redolent of ripe apples, wild honeysuckle, and the sycamore-trees, and for the midges dancing merrily in the clear sunshine above the stream in which she and Florian were wont to fish together ; and but for Shafto and Lady Fettercairn she would have gladly hailed Craigengowan, with its ghost-haunted Howe, its old gate of the legend, Queen Mary’s Thorn, and all their lonely adjuncts, could she but share them with Finella ; but she was all unaware that the latter was there no longer.

Her little stock of money was wearing out, with all her care and frugality, and her whole hope lay in the return of the vicar, who, too probably, would also reproach her with precipitation.

‘Things will come right yet—they always do—if one knows how to wait and trust in God,’ said Dulcie to herself, hopefully but tearfully ; ‘and when two love each other,’ she added, thinking of Florian, ‘they may beat Fate itself.’

Dulcie had not written to Finella, as she was yet without distinct plans ; she only knew that she could not teach, and thus was not ‘cut out’ for a governess. Neither did she write to Florian, as she knew not where to address him, and, knowing not what a day might bring forth, she could not indicate where she was to send an answer. So week followed week ; her sweet hopefulness began to leave her, and a presentiment came upon her that she would never see Florian again. So many misfortunes had befallen her that this would only be one more ; and this presentiment seemed to be realised, and a dreadful shock was given, when by the merest chance she saw

in a paper a few weeks old the same telegram concerning him which had so excited old Mr. Kippilaw, and which had found its way into print, as everything seems to do nowadays.

The transport with sick and wounded was on its homeward way; but when it arrived would he be with it, or sleeping under the waves?

It was a dreadful stroke for Dulcie; her only tie to earth seemed to be passing or to have passed away. She had no one to confide in, no one to condole with her, and for a whole day never quitted her pillow; but, 'at twenty, one must be constitutionally very unsound if grief is to kill one, or even to leave any permanent and abiding mark of its presence.' But she had to undergo the terrible mental torture of waiting—waiting, with idle hands, with throbbing head and aching heart, for the bulletin that might crush her whole existence. He whom she loved with all her heart and soul, who had been woven up with her life since childhood, was far away upon the sea, struggling it might be with death, and she was not by his pillow; and the lips, that had never aught but soft and tender words for her, might be now closed for ever!

Already hope had been departing, we have said. Her heart was now heavy as lead, and all the brightness of youth seemed to have gone out of her life. She began to feel a kind of dull, apathetic misery, most difficult to describe, yet mingled with an aching, gnawing sense of mingled pain.

Florian dying, probably—that was the latest intelligence of him. How curt, how brief, how cruel seemed that item of news, among others!

She opened her silver locket, with the coloured photo of him. The artist had caught his best expression in a happy moment; and it was hard—oh, how hard! for the lonely girl to believe that the loving and smiling face, with its tender dark eyes and crisp brown hair, was now too probably a lifeless piece of clay, mouldering under the waves of the tropical sea.

She had made up her mind to expect the worst, and that she could never see him more.

'It seems to me,' she thought, 'as if I had ceased to be



young, and had grown very old. God help me, now !' she added, as she sank heavily into a chair, with a deathly pale face, and eyes that saw nothing, though staring into the dingy brick street without ; and though Dulcie's tears came readily enough as a general rule, in the presence of this new and unexpected calamity, nature failed to grant her the boon—the relief of weeping freely. 'There is a period in all our lives,' says a writer, 'when the heaviest grief will hardly keep us waking ; we may sink to slumber with undried tears upon our face ; we may sob and murmur through the long night ; but still we have the happy power of losing consciousness and gaining strength to bear the next day's trial.'

So Dulcie, worn with heavy thought, could find oblivion for a time, and even slept with the roar of mighty London in her ears.

The vicar had not yet returned, so day followed day with her, aimlessly and hopelessly.

She thought the public prints could give her no further tidings now. She knew not where to seek for intelligence, and could but wait, dumbly, expectantly, and count the hours as they drifted wearily past, in the desperate longing that some tidings would reach her at some time of her dearest, it might be now her dead, one !

The Parks were completely empty then ; the sunshine was pleasant and warm for the season ; the grass was green and beautiful ; and lured thereby one forenoon, the pale girl went forth for a little air, when there occurred an extraordinary catastrophe that, in her present weakened state of mind and body, was fully calculated to destroy her !

The afternoon passed—the evening and the night too, yet she did not as usual return to her humble lodging. The morning dawned without a trace of her ; the landlady began to appraise her few effects ; the landlord shook his head, winked knowingly, and said, 'She was far too pretty to live alone, and deemed it the old story over again—a waif *lost in London*,

## CHAPTER LVIII.

## THE TERRIBLE MISTAKE.

DULCIE had thought that no possible harm could accrue to her from rambling or sitting in that beautiful Park alone, and watching the children playing with their hoops along the gravelled walk. With whom could she go? She had no one to escort her. She knew not that it was not quite etiquette for a young lady to be there alone and unattended; but the event that occurred to her was one which she could never have anticipated.

She had sat for some time, absorbed in her own thoughts, on one of the rustic sofas not far from Stanhope Gate, all unaware that an odd-looking and mean-looking, but carefully dressed little man had been hovering near her, and observing her closely with his keen small ferret-like eyes, and with an expression of deep interest, destitute, however, of the slightest admiration, and with a kind of sardonic and stereotyped smile in which mirth bore no part.

He scanned her features from time to time, grinned to himself, and ever and anon consulted something concealed in his hand.

‘Golden hair—sealskin jacket—sable muff—hat and feather—a silver necklet—all right,’ he muttered, and then he advanced close towards her.

Dulcie looked up at him with surprise, and then with an emotion of alarm, mingled with confusion, which he was neither slow to see nor misinterpret.

‘May I ask your name?’ said he in a mild tone.

‘Miss Carlyon—Dulcie Carlyon.’

‘Ah! you speak good English.’

‘I am English.’

‘And not a furriner?’

‘No,’ replied Dulcie in growing alarm.

‘But you reside in London, just now?’

'Just now—yes,' said Dulcie, seeing that he was comparing her face with that of a photo in his hand.

'With your family—friends?'

'I have no family—no friends,' said Dulcie, with a sob in her throat, and starting up to withdraw in great alarm.

'Just so—not here, but at Ostend, perhaps.'

Thinking her questioner was mad or intoxicated, Dulcie, in growing terror, was about to move away, when he laid a hand very decidedly on her left arm.

'Leave me,' she exclaimed, and on looking around her terror increased on seeing that no male aid was near her; 'who are you that ask these questions—that dare to molest me?'

'My name is Grabbley—Mr. Gilpin Grabbley, of Scotland Yard—oh, you'll know enough o' me, my dear, before I'm done with you. Come along: you're wanted particklar—you are. Will you walk with me quietly?'

Perceiving that she was about to utter a shriek, he grasped her arm more tightly, even to the bruising of her soft, tender skin, and said in a sharp, hissing tone:

'Don't—don't make a row: 'tain't no use, my beauty—you must come along with me.'

'Oh, what do you mean?' moaned Dulcie, almost incapable of standing now.

'Mean—why, that you are my prisoner, that is all.'

'Am I mad or dreaming? Oh, sir, this is some dreadful mistake.'

'No mistake at all,' said Mr. Grabbley, tauntingly.

They were out in Park Lane now, and Dulcie cast a despairing glance at the many closed and shuttered windows of the mansions there, as if she would summon aid.

'Look here, gal,' said the detective, for such Mr. Grabbley was, 'I have orders to arrest the original of this fotygraf—you are that original—look! don't you see yourself, as if in a looking-glass?'

Dulcie did look, with a kind of horrible fascination, and recognised in it a very striking resemblance to her face and dress—even to the luckless silver locket and chain.



Mr. Grabbley utilised the moments of her bewilderment. He stopped a passing cab—half lifted, half thrust her in.

‘Marlborough Street,’ said he to the driver, as they were driven off.

‘Of what am I accused?’ said Dulcie, driven desperate now.

‘Robbery on the railway—that’s all; and you knows all about it—the when and the where.’

If not the victim of some deliberate outrage, she was certainly the victim of some inexplicable mistake which might yet be explained; anyway, in her ignorance and in her wild fear, she strove to elicit succour from passers-by, till Mr. Grabbley closed the rattling glasses of the cab and held her firmly, while, like one in a dreadful dream, she was rapidly driven through Berkeley Square, across Bond Street and Regent Street, to their destination, where, when the cab stopped, she was quickly taken indoors, through a passage, in which several police officers and odd, repulsive-looking people of both sexes were loitering about, and whence she was conveyed by the inexorable Grabbley, to whom all appeals were vain, and left in a state of semi-stupefaction—after being led down a long corridor, having many doors opening on each side thereof—in a small bare room—a den it seemed, and if not quite a prison-cell, yet dreary, cold, and comfortless enough to suggest the idea of being one.

She heard a key turned upon her, and felt that now—more than ever—she was a prisoner!

She had no sense of indignation as yet—only a wild and clamorous one of fear, or dread, she knew not of what—of being disgraced, and, it might be, the victim of a madman’s freak. She was in utter solitude, and no sound seemed to be there but the loud beating of her heart.

Past grief and anxiety had rendered her very weak and unable to withstand the tension on her nerves caused by this astounding accusation and catastrophe, of which she could neither calculate nor see the end. Then an exhaustion that was utter and complete followed, and for a time she was physically and mentally prostrate—in that awful sense of desolation and

heart-broken grief that God in His mercy permits few to suffer.  
... So passed the night.

'A person—a gentleman,' said a commissionnaire at the 'Rag' doubtfully to Villiers as he entered the vestibule, 'has been waiting here for nearly an hour for you, sir.'

'Oh—it is you, Mr.—Mr.——'

'Grabbley, sir,' said the little man affably, his ferret eyes twinkling, and his vulgar face rippling over with a smile.

'You have some news, I suppose?'

'Yes, sir, I've nabbed her.'

'When?'

'Yesterday morning.'

'Where?'

'In Hyde Park—nigh Stanhope Gate. She speaks English uncommonly well to be a furriner.'

'That's sharp work! You are a clever fellow, Grabbley. Was my pocket-book found upon her?'

'We did not search her, but she is locked up at Marlborough Street, where I would like you to see and identify her before making out the matter in the charge-sheet.'

'All right—get a cab. Come with me, Hammersley, and I'll show you my little Belgienne.'

Hammersley went unwillingly, as it was pretty close on the time he had now begun to visit Finella at her grandmother's residence, and he cast longing eyes at the windows of the latter as he and his two companions were driven out of the square.

'A horrid atmosphere, and a horrid place in all its details,' he muttered, when the scene of Dulcie's detention was reached, and throwing away the fag-end of a cheap cigar, Mr. Grabbley, with an expression of no small satisfaction puckering his visage, unlocked and threw open the door—a sound which roused Dulcie from her stupefied state—and starting up she stood before them, trembling in every fibre, with a hunted expression in her dark blue eyes and a gathering hope in her breast, to find herself confronted by two such men of unexceptional appearance and bearing as Hammersley and Villiers, who raised

his hat, and turning with astonishment and some dismay to the police official, said sharply :

‘This is some great—some truly infernal mistake !’

‘A mistake—how, sir?’ asked Grabbly.

‘This young lady is *not* the person whose photo I gave you.’

‘They seems as like as two peas.’

‘The likeness, I admit, is great, but the Belgian girl, I told you, could not speak a word of English, or scarcely so. I have to offer you a thousand apologies, though the mistake is not mine, but that of this man,’ said Villiers, bowing low to Dulcie, greatly impressed by the sweetness of her beauty, and terror of the predicament in which she had been placed.

‘So it’s a mistake after all, young gal,’ growled Mr. Grabbly, with intense disappointment and reluctance to relinquish his prey.

‘And may I go, sir?’ said Dulcie piteously to Villiers.

‘Most certainly—you are free,’ replied Villiers, who was again about to apologise and explain, but the girl, like a hunted creature, drew her veil tightly across her tear-blotched face, rushed along the dingy corridor, and gained the street in an instant.

That she was a lady in every sense of tone and bearing was evident, and Villiers felt overcome with shame and contrition, and swore in pretty round terms at the crestfallen Grabbly.

‘This is a devil of a mistake !’ said the latter as he scratched his head in dire perplexity.

‘A mistake we have not, perhaps, heard the end of. Who is she?’ asked Villiers.

‘I don’t know.’

‘Did she give you no name?’

‘Yes—here it is,’ said Grabbly, producing a dirty notebook ; ‘Dulcie Carlyon.’

‘A curious and uncommon name.’

‘Who do you say—Dulcie Carlyon?’ exclaimed Hammersley, who had hitherto been silent, starting forward ; and on the



name being repeated to him once or twice, 'Great Heaven !' he exclaimed, 'if it should be the same !'

'Same what—or who ?'

'The girl to whom Florian is engaged: you remember Florian of ours ?'

'Of course I do.'

'Golden hair, blue eyes, under middle height (how often he has described her to me !), and then the name—Dulcie Carlyon ; it must be she—let us overtake her ! What an astounding introduction !'

But that was easier proposed than accomplished. On gaining the street the two officers saw not a trace of Dulcie Carlyon, so all hope of discovering her address was gone.

How Dulcie made her way back to her obscure lodgings she scarcely knew ; but she was long and seriously ill after this startling event.

There she felt as much at home as a creature so poor and friendless could feel. Often she lay abed and seemed unconscious, but she was not so. Her eyes were wide open, and their gaze wandered about ; her lips were generally dry and quivering. She was in the state which generally comes after a severe mental shock ; her mind refused to grasp the situation.

Until a drink was given her by Ellen, the kind little maid-of-all-work, she sometimes knew not how parched her throat was—how sorely athirst she had been.

She was afraid to be left alone after that horrible accusation. In her nervousness she feared that she might see her double—feel a touch, and on turning find herself face to face with her own likeness, as that evil Lord of Fettercairn did who sold his country.

Finella's astonishment to hear from Hammersley the story of where and under what circumstances he had met Dulcie Carlyon was only equalled by his own on learning that Florian, his comrade and brother-officer in the Zulu War, and whilom private soldier in his company of the 24th, was heir to a peerage, and the cousin of his affianced wife, Finella Melfort.

For so it was. Lord and Lady Fettercairn had undergone

so much in the mismanagement of family matters latterly, and in years long past, that they were now well disposed to let Finella alone, and in all conscience they could not expect her to give to Florian (if he ever returned) the love she had never given to the now vanished Shafto.

'Vivian, you must find out the address of dear Dulcie,' said she.

'If I can.'

'You must. I shall want her as one of my bridesmaids.'

From this we may presume that matters between these two were all in fair training now.

'Your wish would delight Villiers, my groomsman, who has been sorrowing about her ever since the time of that terrible mistake.'

---

## CHAPTER LIX.

### DULCIE'S VISITOR.

ON an afternoon subsequent to this episode Dulcie was lost in a day-dream, born of her own sad thoughts, her soft blue eyes fixed vacantly on the hideous and dingy brick edifices of the thoroughfare in which she dwelt; and when roused therefrom by the little maid-of-all-work, she gazed at her with a somewhat dazed expression.

'What is it, Ellen?' she asked.

'A gentleman, miss, wishes to see you.'

Alarm—dread, she knew not of what, was her first idea now.

'Who is he?' she asked.

'I don't know, miss.'

'Is he old or young?'

'Young.'

'Then he can't be the vicar?'

'Oh, lawk, no, miss, he ain't a bit like a clergyman,' replied the housemaid, laughing.

'Ask his business, Ellen.'

She was almost relapsing into her dream again, when she was startled by seeing a man appear beside her.

'Dulcie?' said a voice, that made her heart thrill.

She sprang up to find herself confronted by a gentleman, whose face, though thin and worn, seemed deeply tanned by the sun, so that his scorched neck was absolutely red; his dark moustache was thick and heavy, his shoulders broad and square.

'Dearest Dulcie, don't you know me?' said he, holding out his hands and arms.

'Florian—is this you—really you?'

'I thought you would not quite forget me.'

'Forget you!' said Dulcie, in a low and piercing voice, as she fell upon his breast, and his loving arms went closely round her.

'Oh, Florian, I did not know you were in England!'

'We were landed at Plymouth three days ago. I got your address from good old Paul Pentreath, procured leave of absence, and came on here without a moment's delay, my own darling.'

For some minutes neither could find words to speak, so supreme was the mutual happiness of the sudden reunion.

'How brown you are! but how thin, and how much older you look!' said Dulcie, surveying him with bright but tearful eyes. 'I can scarcely believe you to be the same Florian that left me only a year ago or so.'

'Ay, Dulcie, pet; but soldiering, especially soldiering in the ranks, takes a lot out of a fellow. But I am the same Florian that left you then, with a heavy and hopeless heart indeed.'

'And now——'

'Now I shall leave you no more.'

'What dreadful places you must have been in, Florian; what dangers you have faced; what sufferings, undergone, my love!'

'The thought of you lightened and brightened them all to



me, Dulcie,' said he, while into her bright little English face came that wonderful and adoring smile only possible on the lips and in the eyes of a woman who is in love, and for the object of her love.

She told him of her simple plans and humble prospects, of her hope in the vicar, why she had left Craigengowan, and how she came to be in that poor and cheap lodging-room near Oxford Street.

'We must not lose sight of each other now, my darling,' said he, as she nestled her face on his breast. 'Let us get married at once, love, and then it must be service in India for me. Are you ready to face heat, it may be fever, and Heaven knows what more, Dulcie?'

'Every peril, if with you!'

'My brave little soldier's wife! But suppose we grow tired of each other?'

'You wicked wag!—why think of such a thing?'

'Married folks do sometimes,' said he, laughing.

'Then we should part—I would run away.'

'As a preliminary to that we must be united, Dulcie; so when will you be ready to marry me?'

'Oh, Florian!'

'You must say—we have little time to lose.'

'I have no trousseau to get—and no money for it—we are so poor, Florian.'

'But rich in love—well, then—when?'

'I don't know,' was the shy, coy answer.

'This day three weeks—I can afford even a special licence, Dulcie.'

'So be it, dear Florian.'

'Then I shall write to good old Paul Pentreath about it, and then we must resolutely think of turning our steps to India. We could not afford to live at home.'

Their little plans—little, though of vast importance to them—were all arranged, and discussed so sweetly, so lovingly, again and again, and at last he left her for his hotel, which was not far off, in Oxford Street, with a promise to call for her again

betimes on the morrow ; and to Dulcie it seemed as if the sun had come with a glorious burst of radiance at last into the cloudy atmosphere of her life ; that joy had come with it ; and that sorrow and tears—save those of happiness—had gone for ever.

So, in three weeks the life of Dulcie Carlyon would be over ; and the life of Dulcie MacIan would begin.

Dulcie MacIan—how odd it seemed to sound !

And so, at the appointed time, Mr. Paul Pentreath, summoned to London for the special occasion, tied the 'fatal knot' of the matrimonial noose for these two young people ; and Dulcie, as in a dream, heard him ask :

'Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony?'

And in a clear and confident tone little Dulcie said, 'I will,' as she loved, frankly—loved 'as a fair honest English maiden may with her heart on her lips, and all her soul shining out of her truthful eyes.'

So the marriage passed quietly ; there were no lawyers, dress-makers, outfitters, and all those other folks who never keep time ; no attendants, save Dulcie's landlady, the clerk, and honest Tom Tyrrell, whose 'time being out,' contrived to turn up about this crisis to wish, with all the ardour of his gallant heart, his whilom comrade and officer, with his fair young bride, 'God speed' ; and after a quiet little honeymoon at Richmond—no further off—Florian set forth to the Horse Guards for the purpose of effecting an exchange to a regiment in India ; but a letter that came to him altered all his views and plans.

It was from Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw, W.S., who had seen the marriage announced in a public print, and had written at once to Florian and to Lord Fettercairn.

When Abou Hassan, the merchant of Bagdad, woke up on that remarkable morning, and found himself in the palace of Haroun al Raschid, and treated as the latter by all the beautiful ladies of the Court and the black slaves around his couch, he was scarcely more astonished than our poor Lieutenant of

Infantry, when he found himself to be the heir of Craigengowan and Fettercairn !

He then knew all about Shafto's villainy, yet in the gentleness of his spirit he joined with Dulcie in saying :

'Poor creature ! God help and forgive him, as freely as I do.'

Sooth to say, Dulcie was perhaps less astonished on finding Florian was the true heir ; she had ever thought there was some mystery in the new position and new relationship, so suddenly assumed by the wily Shafto, whose tissue of falsehoods had, as usual in such cases, broken down by an unthought-of point.

Amid the sudden splendour of his prospects, such was his simplicity of character, that one of Florian's first thoughts was of a cosy cottage at Craigengowan for his comrade, Tom Tyrrell !

The news spread like wildfire through all the Mearns, Angus, and everywhere else. It proved a great godsend, and the vicinity of Inverbervie was besieged by folks connected with the press, all eager to glean the last authentic information from Craigengowan ; and even Grapeston the butler, and Mac-Crupper the head groom, were interviewed and treated—the former with wine, and the latter copiously with whisky and water—on the subject.

To Lady Fettercairn the marriage of Florian proved, of course, a source of bitter mortification.

'Another *mésalliance*—like father, like son !' she exclaimed ; 'now indeed we shall be associated with Freethinkers, franchise folks, dynamiters, and all kinds of dreadful people !' she wailed out.

The first alleged and hurriedly accepted heir had proved a ruinous blackleg ; the second and true one was Flora MacIan's son beyond all doubt—a gallant young fellow, who had 'gone through the ranks to a commission !' but, alas ! he had married Dulcie Carlyon—the Devonshire lawyer's daughter—her 'companion,' whom she had treated with no small contumely at Craigengowan, where she was now to be welcomed as a bride and the future Lady Fettercairn !



It was all too much for the aristocratic brain of the present holder of that rank.

She sat in her boudoir at Craigengowan ; it was small, but wonderfully pretty ; the chairs were all of ivory and gilt ; the walls hung with pale blue silk, embroidered with flowers ; and she thought ruefully of the time when—if her lord predeceased her—she would have to quit all that, and take up her abode at Finella Lodge, the humble dower-house—giving place to Dulcie Carlyon. It was all too horrible to think of !

But the couple were coming, and already she could hear the distant cheers of the tenantry.

Several young ladies—among them the daughters of Mr. Kippilaw—were seated about the room in expectation and in lounging attitudes, their garden bonnets or riding habits showing how they had been recently occupied.

A distant sound—was it of carriage-wheels—made her lap-dog bark.

‘Down, Snap—be quiet,’ said Lady Fettercairn, with more asperity than was her wont to that plethoric and pampered cur.

The Volunteers were under arms on the lawn to salute Florian Melfort as a hero from Zululand ; and a salute to his bride was boomed forth from an old battery of six-pounders on the terrace ; a banner was flaunting on the old tower, above all the vanes and turrets ; bells were clashing in the distant kirk spire, and the cheers of the Craigengowan tenantry rang up amid the ancient trees in welcome to the heir of Fettercairn and his winsome young wife.

Lord Fettercairn received them at the door with what grace he might ; but the hands of many others were held forth to him, among others those of old Kenneth Kippilaw, Madelon Galbraith, the aged butler, and Sandy MacCrupper.

All shadows had fled away, and the bright sunshine of heaven was over Craigengowan and in the hearts of all there.

Even Lady Fettercairn, when she met Florian and saw how like her youngest son and his portrait he looked, felt all that she had of a mother’s heart go forth to him as it had never done to the vanished Shafto ; while Florian, modest and gentle Florian,

whose heart had never quailed before the enemy, now felt, as he said to Dulcie, somewhat 'dashed' on being confronted by this tall and aristocratic grandmother amid such splendid surroundings.

Dulcie recalled with wonder the humble position she had held at Craigengowan, and the many fears and mortifications to which she had been subjected by Lady Fettercairn and Shafto till the eventful morning of her flight, and how strange it seemed to her to be able to act as guide and cicerone over his own patrimony to Florian, and to show him that she was quite at home in that hitherto unknown land to him—the Howe of the Mearns!

And in a week or two more Finella and Hammersley were coming thither on their honeymoon trip.

THE END.





# MORLEY'S UNIVERSAL LIBRARY.

---

23. IDEAL COMMONWEALTHS : MORE'S UTOPIA ;  
BACON'S NEW ATLANTIS ; AND CAMPANELLA'S  
CITY OF THE SUN.
24. CAVENDISH'S LIFE OF WOLSEY.
- 25 and 26. DON QUIXOTE (Two Volumes).
27. BURLESQUE PLAYS AND POEMS.
28. DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDY. Longfellow's Translation.
29. GOLDSMITH'S VICAR OF WAKEFIELD, PLAYS,  
AND POEMS.
30. FABLES AND PROVERBS FROM THE SANSKRIT.
31. CHARLES LAMB'S ESSAYS OF ELIA.
32. THE HISTORY OF THOMAS ELLWOOD, Written by  
Himself.
33. EMERSON'S ESSAYS, REPRESENTATIVE MEN, AND  
SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE.
34. SOUTHEY'S LIFE OF NELSON.
35. DE QUINCEY'S OPIUM EATER, SHAKSPEARE,  
GOETHE.
36. STORIES OF IRELAND. By Maria Edgeworth.
37. THE PLAYS OF ARISTOPHANES, Translated by Frere.
38. SPEECHES AND LETTERS. By Edmund Burke.
39. THOMAS À KEMPIS' IMITATION OF CHRIST.
40. POPULAR SONGS OF IRELAND, Collected by  
Thomas Crofton Croker.
41. THE PLAYS OF ÆSCHYLUS, Translated by R. Potter.

---

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,  
LONDON AND NEW YORK.

# MORLEY'S UNIVERSAL LIBRARY.

---

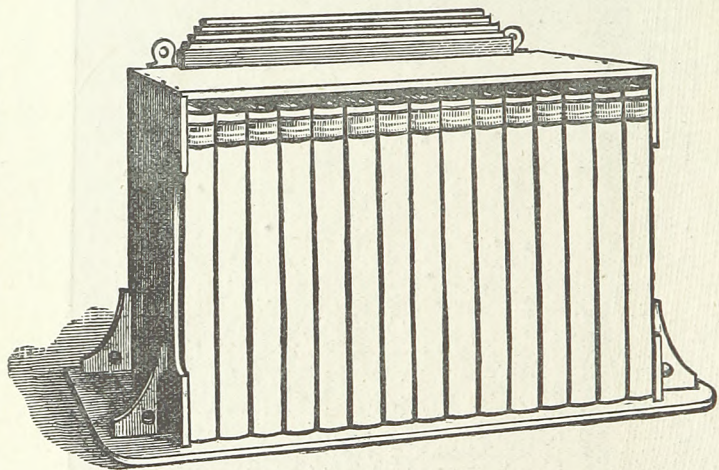
1. SHERIDAN'S PLAYS.
2. PLAYS FROM MOLIERE. By English Dramatists.
3. MARLOWE'S FAUSTUS AND GOETHE'S FAUST.
4. CHRONICLE OF THE CID.
5. RABELAIS' GARGANTUA, AND THE HEROIC DEEDS OF PANTAGRUEL.
6. THE PRINCE. By Machiavelli.
7. BACON'S ESSAYS.
8. DE FOE'S JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR.
9. LOCKE ON TOLERATION AND ON CIVIL GOVERNMENT; WITH SIR ROBERT FILMER'S PATRIARCHA.
10. BUTLER'S ANALOGY OF RELIGION.
11. DRYDEN'S VIRGIL.
12. SIR WALTER SCOTT'S DEMONOLOGY AND WITCHCRAFT.
13. HERRICK'S HESPERIDES.
14. COLERIDGE'S TABLE TALK: WITH THE ANCIENT MARINER AND CHRISTABEL.
15. BOCCACCIO'S DECAMERON.
16. STERNE'S TRISTRAM SHANDY.
17. HOMER'S ILIAD, Translated by George Chapman.
18. MEDIÆVAL TALES.
19. JOHNSON'S RASSELAS; AND VOLTAIRE'S CANDIDE.
20. PLAYS AND POEMS BY BEN JONSON.
21. HOBBS'S LEVIATHAN.
22. BUTLER'S HUDIBRAS.

---

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,  
LONDON AND NEW YORK.



Fifteen Volumes in an Oak Bookcase.



Price One Guinea.

---

"Marvels of clear type and general neatness."—*Daily Telegraph*.

---

**MORLEY'S**  
**UNIVERSAL LIBRARY.**

In Monthly Volumes, ONE SHILLING Each.

*READY ON THE 25th OF EACH MONTH.*



# PEARS' SOAP

## A SPECIALTY FOR THE COMPLEXION

*Recommended by SIR ERASMUS WILSON, F.R.S., late President  
of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, as*

*"The most refreshing and agreeable of balms for the skin."*

---

**MDME. ADELINA PATTI** writes:—"I have  
found PEARS' SOAP *matchless for the hands  
and complexion.*"

**MRS. LANGTRY** writes:—"Since using PEARS'  
SOAP for the hands and complexion, *I have  
discarded all others.*"

**MDME. MARIE ROZE** (*Prima Donna, Her  
Majesty's Theatre*) writes:—"For preserving  
the complexion, keeping the skin soft, free  
from redness and roughness, and the hands in  
nice condition, PEARS' SOAP *is the finest  
preparation in the world.*"

**MISS MARY ANDERSON** writes:—"I have  
used PEARS' SOAP for two years with the  
greatest satisfaction, for *I find it the very best.*"

---

**PEARS' SOAP—SOLD EVERYWHERE**